SIGILL SCHOLAE RELIGIONIS PACIFICAE
COND A.D. 1866
PRO
VERITATE
ET
REGNO
DEI
BHC

CHARLES HOLBROOK LIBRARY
Pacific School of Religion

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

https://archive.org/details/divinegoodnessst00unse

DIVINE GOODNESS,
A STUDY OF THE UNITY OF METAPHYSICAL AND MORAL PERFECTION IN GOD

by
David Metz Stowe
B. A., University of California
at Los Angeles, 1940

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

THESIS

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

Submitted in the Department of Christian Theology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Theology
in the
Pacific School of Religion
May, 1953

46026

BT
137
S86
1953

~~RQ20~~
~~St78~~

PREFACE

"Divine Goodness" suggests a very large subject indeed for a monograph of this character. Against the background of 2,000 years of Christian history and thought a whole cluster of meanings group themselves about that phrase. Divine Fatherhood, love, grace, mercy, glory, holiness, perfection--these are but some of the attributes of God to which the term "good" points. Each has been the subject of detailed study, and has found its place in the classic systematic expositions of Christian doctrine. Obviously our task cannot be the review and criticism of this entire literature; nor does it seem likely that at this date very much that is new can be said on the subject. And yet, as we hope to show, there remains at the very heart of this central idea of Christian faith a quite specific ambiguity which, although often unrecognized, has the gravest practical consequences for the message of the church.

This topic is taken first of all in its practical, moral sense. We raise the question, "Is God good, and in what way?" with the same directness as we might ask, "Is that man good?" Immediately, however, it becomes evident that this question, even when put in simple form, raises complicated issues. There is much diversity and ambiguity in moral criteria as applied even to other men. Yet without doubt the vast majority of mankind would at least know what

PREFACE

"Divine Goodness" suggests a very large subject indeed for a monograph of this character. Against the background of 2,000 years of Christian history and thought a whole cluster of meanings group themselves about that phrase. Divine Fatherhood, love, grace, mercy, glory, holiness, perfection--these are but some of the attributes of God to which the term "good" points. Each has been the subject of detailed study, and has found its place in the classic systematic expositions of Christian doctrine. Obviously our task cannot be the review and criticism of this entire literature; nor does it seem likely that at this date very much that is new can be said on the subject. And yet, as we hope to show, there remains at the very heart of this central idea of Christian faith a quite specific ambiguity which, although often unrecognized, has the gravest practical consequences for the message of the church.

This topic is taken first of all in its practical, moral sense. We raise the question, "Is God good, and in what way?" with the same directness as we might ask, "Is that man good?" Immediately, however, it becomes evident that this question, even when put in simple form, raises complicated issues. There is much diversity and ambiguity in ethical criteria as applied even to other men. Yet without doubt the vast majority of mankind would at least know what

the question meant. And in spite of all differences in standards and ideals there is much evidence to support the view that nearly as large a majority would agree on the criteria for such a judgment.[1] In any event, in case of doubt all Christian theology will naturally accept as its final criteria the principles of goodness represented by the life and teaching of Jesus.

Without embarking upon an elaborate ethical analysis, therefore, it would seem possible to suggest the essential content of that moral "goodness" with which we are here concerned by means of two terms, love and justice. Love would represent an outgoing, sympathetic, positive concern for the welfare and the happiness of all those within the range of one's effective action. Justice suggests the orderly, dependable, fair and purposeful character of that concern. Put very simply, we are asking, "Is God loving and just in this humanly appreciated way? Can we trust ourselves to Him as we would to a good friend?"

---

[1] A. Campbell Garnett, The Moral Nature of Man, A Critical Evaluation of Ethical Principles (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952), chap. i, is a persuasive recent statement of the essential unanimity of human moral judgment. In evidence one might offer the practically universal appeal of such lives as Socrates, Jesus, or Lincoln. Even in a society with an entirely different ethos from that in which these men were nurtured, as for example, Communist China, their "goodness" is generally accepted without question.

It is certainly not without significance that such an ethically doubtful character as Stalin is lauded by those who approve him as the great "Father" of his people, and the benevolent and self-sacrificing leader of "all progressive peoples." In almost every case of this sort, the problem is not the kind of character which is called "good", but rather the limits of the sphere within which that goodness is operative. The goodness of a modern dictator is, of course, con-

It is important to be clear about the words "humanly appreciated." Our study will show that the history of theology is full of an ambiguous use of the term "good" for aspects of the divine activity which are quite irrelevant to moral goodness as we use it in ordinary discourse, and may indeed actually be in contradiction to it. One is reminded by such theology of the use of "peace" in current political controversy. For the Communist "peaceful" is by definition what the Communist state is and does, even though by the ordinary standards of human discourse its actions may be the reverse of peaceful. Likewise a theological habit of long standing makes "good" mean whatever God is said to do or be, regardless of conflict with goodness as understood in human relations. From such usage can come only confusion, or worse. It might well be maintained that the breakdown of ethical discrimination begins with the exemption of God--or of a political state, or any other entity--from the criteria of commonly appreciated moral principles.

The practical bearing of this question upon the ministry of the Christian church is very great. Nothing less than the determination of its essential message is at stake. Is that message a "gospel", a good news of promise and of hope for a divine succour beyond the expectation of purely

---

fined to the class or nation or race with which he is identified. But the goodness of a universal God must by the nature of the case be all-inclusive. That is what universal means. Monotheism is inevitably committed to this view, as the development of Biblical theology vividly illustrates.

secular experience and faith? Or is the real core of the church's proclamation a call to acceptance, to resignation to an order of reality which simply is as it appears to be, impersonal and ultimately tragic? Sophistication of intellect and the catastrophes of history combine today to urge with a new impressiveness the ancient message of Buddhism, that salvation is to be found in resignation. The terminology may be that of existentialism, psychiatry, or philosophical theology, but the meaning is the same. To put it very bluntly: is God what we want Him to be, in the deepest and truest and most sensitive meaning of that phrase? Or is it the task of religion to reconcile us to an order of things which bears no essential relation to our longings for cosmic support of the best we find within us?

So doubtful has this issue become in our day that even to raise the question will sound in many quarters like intolerable anthropocentrism. Yet it is difficult to see how an honest reading of the tradition can lead to any other conclusion than that just such a gospel of promise has been the essential message of the Christian faith. Acceptance of reality has always been a part of the gospel, but what is the nature of that reality? "God is light and in him is no darkness at all,"[1] is the answer; or more simply, "God is love."[2] Thus the message of the church has been in terms of

---

[1] I John 1:5. All quotations from the New Testament are from the Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946).

[2] I John 4:8.

"good tidings of a great joy,"[1] the proclamation of "precious and very great promises."[2] It is an inquiry into the fact upon which such a message is founded, then, which engages us here: the fact of the positive, humanly appreciated moral goodness of God.

The organization of our inquiry represents the writer's conception of sound theological method. It is two-fold in character: historical, and speculative or logical. Just because the topic for consideration is so freighted with emotional and subjective longing, it is all the more necessary to employ an approach which provides for the maximum of objectivity. Much popular theology of all times but particularly of today is so constructed as to rest the final weight of its conclusions upon the writer's subjective religious intuitions or the ostensible "requirements" of his faith. To be sure, in the final analysis all thought whatever rests upon subjectively felt requirements of reason and valuation; but criticism may properly be directed against a too quick and facile trimming of the results of theological inquiry to fit the so-called religious requirements of what may after all be a small group of thinkers in one short generation of time.[3]

---

[1] Luke 2:10.

[2] II Peter 1:4.

[3] As an example of such procedure one thinks immediately of the influential and much criticized essay of William James, "The Will to Believe," in The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908), pp. 1 ff. But many more conventional theologians exhibit these same tendencies. Cf. Albert C. Knudson, The

A broader, sounder objectivity is achieved by taking the entire experience of the Christian community as one vast and continuous experiment testing the ways of God with men and by basing one's conclusions largely upon that broad and substantial foundation. In the temporal sweep and the empirical breadth of such a tradition the small swings of the pendulum of piety and of theory assume their proper dimensions and a firmer grounding of our thought is achieved. Hence a major portion of this study is devoted to analyzing the way in which the great idea of divine goodness of God is handled by key thinkers of the Protestant tradition.

Objectivity is achieved in another way when aspiration and longing are strictly disciplined by logic in the shaping of doctrine. The reasons of the heart cannot be eliminated from theology--nor should they be. But they cannot be finally determinative in theology, any more than in history or psychology, without gravely menacing the integrity of the whole discipline. We need to know what God _is_, not what we wish

---

Doctrine of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1930), pp. 318 f.; W. R. Matthews, _God in Christian Experience_ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, n.d.), pp. 105, 236; William Adams Brown, _Christian Theology in Outline_ (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), pp. 131 f.; Francis McConnell, _Is God Limited?_ (New York: Abingdon Press, 1924), pp. 50 f.; Douglas Clyde Mackintosh, _Theology as an Empirical Science_ (New York, The Macmillan Company, 1919), pp. 159 ff. Even Paul Tillich, _Systematic Theology_ (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, 273, seems to use a psychological need to define a theological symbol. It is interesting to find Auguste Comte, spiritual father of modern agnostic scientism, using exactly the same method in its baldest form; cf. A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, _The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy_ ("Gifford Lectures," 1912 and 1913; Aberdeen: For the University, 1917), p. 150.

Him to be--though our wishes undoubtedly constitute part of the evidence for His real nature. Struggle as they may, theologians must ultimately recognize that theology is in part a metaphysical discipline, and that those methods of intellectual inquiry which are most fruitful in attacking the fundamental problems of philosophy must be employed wisely in this field as well.[1]

It is my conviction, moreover, that the most fruitful ventures in metaphysics are those in which logical rigor is combined intimately with a very sympathetic and vivid perception of concrete experience and with great speculative imagination. Plato's great place in philosophy rests largely upon his marvellous exemplification of these three characteristics, while in recent times the work of Whitehead, Peirce and Montague provides effective examples of the same approach. In current philosophical theology Charles Hartshorne, Nels Ferré, and Paul Tillich employ this method with varying degrees of adequacy.

In the systematic and positive sections of this essay, therefore, the attempt is made to apply these methods of analysis and construction, logical, empirical, and speculative,

---

[1] Interesting evidence of this unavoidable connection between theology and metaphysics is found in the Gifford Lectures of a theologian radically opposed to "speculation" in theology. An almost Berkeleian idealism peeps through in Emil Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, Part I, Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), pp. 26 f., 160. Cf. William Temple, "The Divinity of Christ," B. H. Streeter et al, Foundations, A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought: By Seven Oxford Men (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1913), p. 217.

to the particular problem of divine goodness in its complex and manifold aspects. Only the issue will reveal whether the attempt succeeds in making that great idea more vivid, more concrete, and more intelligible, and in showing it to be squarely based upon the experience of the great community of Christians. The goal, at least, seems a not unworthy one.

A philosophical friend reports hearing a long lecture by a leading logical positivist in which the speaker tried in vain to resolve a number of highly intricate and minute problems in which that school of thought specializes. At the conclusion he asked the rhetorical question: "And what is the point? Simply to show that if it is as hard as all this to solve little bitty problems, there's no use at all in tackling big ones!"

A sounder alternative might be to conclude that in the final analysis nothing but the great themes of human life and destiny are worth our mental travail; and that once insight into the height and depth of human experience has been won, the little issues find their proper solution within the context of a great vision. Such, at least, is the faith of the writer.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my debt to my teachers, particularly Dr. Hugh Vernon White and Dr. Ralph Douglas Hyslop, for generous guidance and criticism; and to Miss Myra Keplinger and my wife, without whose kindness and skill this essay would still be without form and void.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter Page

I. INTRODUCTION--THE TOPIC, ITS BEARINGS AND TREATMENT 1

The Topic
    Differing views of divine goodness
    Motives for placing God beyond moral judgment
    Motives for relating God to moral norms
    Moral transcendence in Protestant thought
    Divine impassibility and divine goodness
Wider Bearings of the Topic
Treatment of the Topic
    The thinkers selected for analysis
    The structure of the historical analysis
    Systematic analysis and constructive statement

II. MARTIN LUTHER 36

Luther's Fundamental Apprehension of God
    The majesty of God
    Craving for assurance
    The divine mystery
The Doctrine of a Hidden God
God and Moral Norms: Specific Statements
The Sovereign Freedom of God
God and Reason
God and Law
    Medieval background and Luther's reaction
    Luther on natural law
    Theological significance of law
Justification, and the Justice of God
    The justice of God
    Atonement
    Justification and forgiveness
Predestination
Providence, or the Divine Causality
God and Evil
    External or physical evil
    Dualism
God's Moral Character: His Goodness
    Wrath and love
    The divine goodness
Summary and conclusions

Chapter Page

III. HULDREICH ZWINGLI 100

Concerning Zwingli Himself
    His Position in Protestant theology
    Personal character and piety
    Sources of Zwingli's thought
Doctrine of God
    The goodness of God
    The being of God
    God's attributes as Creator
    Divine wisdom
    Freedom of the divine will
Divine Providence
    The problem of evil
Election
Conclusion

IV. JOHN CALVIN 144

Concerning the Man
    The general character of his thought
    Calvin's conversion
Justification by Faith
Predestination
    Election
    Reprobation
    Providence
    Implications of predestination
God and Moral Order
    God and moral norms
    God and evil
The Depth of Divine Majesty
    God's transcendent greatness
    Depth of the divine mystery
The Divine Goodness
    God in Christ
Conclusions

V. RICHARD HOOKER 197

Concerning the Man
The Idea of Law
Reason and Will in God
Divine Goodness
    Divine perfection
    Divine justice
    Divine mercy and love
The Rule of God
    Providence
    Predestination
The Problem of Evil
Conclusions

Chapter Page

VI. JOHN WESLEY 232

The Man and His Thought
The Goodness of God
    God as loving
    The justice of God
    Justification
    God and moral norms
The Greatness of God
    Divine depth and mystery
    God's will and its freedom
    Divine power
Three Critical Doctrines
    Predestination
    Providence
    The problem of evil
Conclusions

VII. THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS 274

Results of the Analysis
    Metaphysical and moral goodness both affirmed
    Confirmation in recent theology
The Problem of a Genuinely Unified Doctrine of God
    Difficulties in a personalist answer
    The problem of paradox
Conclusions

VIII. THE SEARCH FOR A BASIC CATEGORY FOR THE NATURE OF GOD 312

The Reason for a Categorial Analysis
The Category of Power
    Its role in the tradition
    Evaluation of the category of power
The Category of Order
    The importance of Order in Christian thought
    The Platonic use of Order
    Platonic pluralism in Christian theology
    Implication of atonement theories
    Difficulties in a dualism of Power and Order
    The element of Order is in God
    Conclusion: both Order and Power essential
The Category of Being
    Historical Significance
    Analysis of the concept of Being
    Being as qualitative fullness

Chapter Page

IX. SYMPATHY AS A METAPHYSICAL CATEGORY 367

Love in the Theological Tradition
    Problems in the definition of God as Love
Omniscience and Omnipresence
    Divine omniscience
    Divine omnipresence
    Divine omniscience and Love
Sympathy and the Other Categories
    Sympathy as Being
    Sympathy as Order
    Sympathy as Power
Sympathy as Metaphysical Excellence
Conclusions

X. SYMPATHY AS MORAL EXCELLENCE 416

The Specification of Moral Perfection
Sympathy as Love
Sympathy as Justice
    Love and Justice
Problems in this Interpretation of Divine Goodness
    Is *agape* "appropriate" Love?
    Is divine freedom preserved?
    Is God personal?
Necessary Goodness and Divine Perfection
The Moral of the Story

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

THE TOPIC, ITS BEARINGS AND TREATMENT

Page

The Topic 2

- Differing Views of Divine Goodness 3
- Motives for Placing God Beyond Moral Judgment. 9
    - The desire to exalt God
    - Recognition of the limitations of the mind
    - God conceived by way of abstraction
    - The moral ambiguity of experience
    - Summary
- Motives for Relating God to Moral Norms . . . 17
    - The deliverances of piety
    - Rational norms seem universal
    - Practical difficulties in moral transcendence
- Moral Transcendence in Protestant Thought . . 21
    - The Reformation rebellion against the Roman system
    - A revival of piety led to the exaltation of God
    - The depreciation of man
- Divine Impassibility and Divine Goodness . . . 27

Wider Bearings of the Topic 31

Treatment of the Topic 31

- The Thinkers Selected for Analysis 32
- The Structure of the Historical Analysis . . . 32
- Systematic Analysis and Constructive Statement 35

CHAPTER I

THE TOPIC, ITS BEARINGS AND TREATMENT

The Topic

To ask whether God as conceived in any of the great traditions of Christian thought is "good" might easily be thought a singularly superfluous question. In all ages and all cultures, in spite of much vagueness about the gods, man's "one axiom is that they are good."[1] Worship has always been "worth-ship," ascribing final and supreme value to God as worthy of absolute devotion. The very words God and good are closely related in derivation. Even more impressive is the testimony of the hymns, prayers, liturgies, and scriptures which record the religious experience of mankind. They contain an almost universal acknowledgment that "God means goodness, and goodness means God."[2]

And yet such is the ambiguity of the term "good" that its ascription to deity may cover several very different conceptions of the real nature, purpose, and activity of God.

---

[1] R. R. Marett, Faith, Hope and Charity in Primitive Religion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932), p. 155.

[2] Roger Hazelton, The God We Worship (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), pp. 43 f.

Differing Views of Divine Goodness

While continuing to call Him "good" men have, in fact, conceived God's relation to the norms by which they formulate their own moral judgments in at least three very different ways:

1) God has been held to be entirely unconcerned about moral discriminations and norms, to be remote from all moral concerns. This is the view traditionally called Epicurean and quite rightly, for the first of the fundamental doctrines of the Epicurean school is this: "The Blissful and Imperishable neither for itself knows trouble nor gives trouble to anyone else, so that it is not involved in either angry passions or favours." Epicurus specifically denied that the gods "show favour to good men, and regard everything of the opposite kind as alien."[1] Aristotle's theology, in which God is simply Thought thinking itself in sublime obliviousness to all else, is another familiar example of the same view.[2] Through Aristotle this view passed into medieval Christian thought where it had a significant effect in shaping the concept of divine goodness.[3]

---

[1] Edwyn Bevan, Later Greek Religion ("The Library of Greek Thought"; Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), pp. 38 f.

[2] Aristotle, Metaphysics, XII, 7, 9; The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. with introduction by Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 879 ff., 884 f.

[3] In view of this fact it is highly interesting to find a Roman Catholic theologian commenting on Aristotle thus: "With Aristotle, the Greeks had gained an indisputably

2) God might, on the other hand, be concerned about human moral action and might indeed be the source of moral obligation, willing that men conform to norms which He had set forth; and yet be Himself utterly unbound by these norms. By virtue of His superior metaphysical status He would then be "beyond good and evil" so far as human ethical judgments were concerned, and yet still be thought worthy of worship. Men have often been constrained to believe, with Gloucester, that

> As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;
> They kill us for their sport.[1]

Although from the standpoint of the flies such boys are certainly not "good," yet many men might hold that they were good enough from the human standpoint simply because flies are so immeasurably inferior to man in nature and value that in dealing with them we are not bound by any norms. In comparison with flies any man is "good," just because he is a man. Or, if this be dubious, at least it might be agreed that certainly the worst man, in morals or talents, is of more "value," more "worth," than the best fly. And there is a deep connection between the ideas of worth and of "goodness," as we shall see.

It was in some such way as this, then, that the popular Greek theology thought of its gods. Immoral, capricious,

---

rational theology, but they had lost their religion." Étienne Gilson, God and Philosophy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), p. 34.

[1] King Lear, Act IV, Scene i, ll.38 f., in Hardin Craig, Shakespeare, A Historical and Critical Study (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1931), p. 879.

even malicious though they might be, yet they were divine and worthy of worship. So it was that the Jehovah of certain strands of Protestantism might call upon his worshippers to be willing to be damned to His glory. The Platonic protest against the Olympians[1] and the revulsion of modern Christianity against a degenerate Calvinism[2] simply symbolize the dawning realization that a sharp disparity exists between human moral judgments and the conception of divine character.

3) In the third place, it has been held that God is validly and significantly related to moral norms which are essentially like those which men can grasp and appreciate. He *transcends* all human moral achievement by seeing the meaning of moral norms with greater distinctness and certainty than men are capable of, by fulfilling them more perfectly in action, and by exemplifying them more fully in His own nature. But in so doing He only confirms human moral judgment. A representative spokesman for modern Protestantism puts this view succinctly: "The word 'good' means the same in Him and in us, else it means nothing to us; and when all errors have been corrected, and all inadequacies outgrown, and the best conception of moral good that is possible to man has been

---

[1] Plato, Republic, II, 362 D ff., in *The Works of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett (4 vols. in one; New York: Tudor Publishing Company, n.d.), II, 50 ff.

[2] As noted, for example, by Frank Hugh Foster, *A Genetic History of the New England Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1907), p. 547 and *passim*.

reached, it will be found that God corresponds to that conception, while yet he transcends it."[1]

In view of the sharp differences among these three ways of conceiving God's relation to humanly appreciated moral norms the question naturally arises, How can the term "good" be applied to God in all three cases? That it should be so is surprising, no doubt; but that it has been so is proved to the hilt by the history of religion. The reason seems to lie in a fundamental ambiguity in the meaning of the word "good," or even in the idea of "goodness."

In ordinary discourse the term "good" is perfectly applicable in cases where little or no moral meaning is involved. A dessert is good, or an automobile, a feat of physical strength, a beautiful vase, and so on. Likewise we call love, heroism, loyalty, fairness, and the other virtues good, as well as the character which produces them. Good, then, means in general anything which is worthy of approval, anything which impresses us as having value, worth, or desirability. But this "good" may or may not call for moral approval, have moral value or moral worth.

In religion the deity, as we have seen, is always ascribed high value. For most purposes, indeed, God might be defined as that to which we attribute supreme worth.[2]

---

[1] William Newton Clarke, An Outline of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), p. 69.

[2] Cf. the discussion of the definition of religion in Edgar Sheffield Brightman, A Philosophy of Religion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940), pp. 15 ff., especially his definition on p. 17.

But that value or worth need not necessarily be moral, although it is usually assumed to include moral goodness for reasons which will be expounded later on; and just here is the crux of the problem of the goodness of God. It was this problem with which Schleiermacher was concerned when he formulated his distinction between teleological and aesthetic religions. Although his own preoccupation with the subjective aspects of religion led him to expound that distinction in a way which is somewhat different from our analysis here, Schleiermacher was really wrestling with these two contrasted, though not necessarily mutually exclusive, ideas of divine goodness when he said that the widest diversity between forms of religion is that between the teleological and aesthetic varieties. The former, subjectively, finds religion primarily a call to moral activity, the latter to passive contemplation and appreciation of the absolute power and splendor of God.[1] Translated from subjective terms into a doctrine of God, this difference means that in one view God is primarily an object of admiration for His sheer metaphysical glory; in the other, that the moral excellence of deity is the all-important consideration. To be sure, there is no formal reason why a metaphysically or "aesthetically" supreme being cannot exhibit supreme moral excellence, and vice versa. In Christianity the attempt has always been made to hold the two sides together. But they

---

[1] Friedrich Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, translation from 2d German ed., ed. by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948), pp. 39 ff.

are quite distinguishable in thought. Indeed, the two sides are often so formulated as definitely to subordinate one to the other, or even so as to make them quite incompatible. A large part of the analysis to follow will show how and why this is the case.

In particular, two ways might be specified in which a conception of divine goodness which is fundamentally non-moral is obtained. First, God may be conceived of as highly abstract, remote, metaphysically transcendent. His nature will be thought of as sheer "Being" or as something even more ineffable and abstract. Almost inevitably this kind of thinking makes God really impersonal and quite out of touch with the vicissitudes of earth and of human moral experience. In such a case, there can be little meaning in the thought of His moral goodness, though He may be conceived to be the sum of all metaphysical excellence.

Second, God may be held to be a "living God," active, dynamic, personal, full of concern for history and solicitous for proper human conduct. But His activity and concern will be so correlated with absolute power and particularly with absolute and arbitrary freedom of will, with "sovereignty" as that term has often been used in the theological tradition, that He is really beyond good and evil. That is, it is sheer omnipotence or majesty, the glory of His might, which furnishes the decisive categories for His conception. The way in which He exercises power, the character or quality of His will, becomes a secondary consideration.

It is apparent that these two ways of making the metaphysical goodness of God supreme correspond to the two views outlined earlier in which God is thought to be out of any essential and binding relation with moral goodness, as humanly understood. Over against them is the other possibility that supreme worth is ascribed to the moral character of God, and that this becomes the decisive criterion for doctrines concerning His metaphysical nature. At a later stage in our argument the attempt will be made to see whether attempts to hold together *both* kinds of goodness as equally valid and determinative have succeeded. But at this point it is enough to state clearly these possibilities for confusion about the meaning of divine goodness which have made so much theology ambiguous.

Motives for Placing God Beyond Moral Judgment

That these alternatives are far from empty and that the questions they suggest are far from remote or irrelevant will be discovered by even a little reflection on certain pervasive motives of the religious life.

The desire to exalt God.--There is in most religion a tendency to exalt God as far as possible.[1]

> I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and uplifted, with the skirts of his robe filling the temple. Over him stood seraphim. . . .And they kept calling to one another, and saying,
>
> "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts,
> The whole earth is full of his glory."

---

[1] See Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), for a classic statement on this point, and for illustrative material.

> And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the sound of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.[1]

It may be Isaiah in the temple at Jerusalem, or Job hearing the voice from the whirlwind,[2] or the prophet John on Patmos seeing "a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away."[3] Everywhere one finds this distinguishing characteristic of "high" religion. Paul Tillich states a judgment about both historical religions and his own piety when he affirms, for example, that the testimony of "classical religion" to the "overwhelming impression of the divine majesty" makes it necessary for him, against admittedly forceful objections, to cling to the theoretical affirmation of extreme divine transcendence implied in the application of the term "unconditional."[4]

Because God is so lofty and exalted that "no one has ever seen God"[5] it is easily concluded that the reality of God quite transcends our vision, our understanding and our judgment. Thus Aulén concludes that for Christian faith "the idea of the distance between the divine and the human

---

[1] Isaiah 6:1-4. This and all Old Testament references unless otherwise noted are from The Complete Bible, An American Translation, trans. J. M. Powis Smith et al. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1935).

[2] Job 38:1-42:6.

[3] Revelation 20:11.

[4] Paul Tillich, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," The Theology of Paul Tillich, ed. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall ("The Library of Living Theology"; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 340.

[5] John 1:18.

is its most fundamental axiom."[1]

There are clear and powerful motivations for this general tendency to place God beyond human apprehension and judgment. It is part of the essence of religious feeling to abase oneself before the glory and majesty of God, to praise and magnify Him in the most vivid possible ways, to ascribe every conceivable excellence to Him and then to affirm that His purposes go beyond the conceivable to include

> What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
> nor the heart of man conceived.[2]

It is likewise characteristic of piety to insist that God is far more than a purveyor of human wants.[3] Man exists for God, not God for man.

Recognition of the limitations of the mind.--This pious impulse of the worshipping soul is reinforced by reflection upon the imperfect character of the human understanding. Much as men have been impressed by the marvel of their intellect, they have also been forced to confess its

---

[1] Gustav Aulén, The Faith of the Christian Church, trans. from the fourth Swedish edition by Eric H. Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden (Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 98.

[2] I Corinthians 2:9. We must note, however, that the intent of the writer here is to raise the quality of humanly appreciated divine goodness above the level of clear comprehension. No moral agnosticism appears in the New Testament but the motives at work here have produced it elsewhere.

[3] Baron Friedrich von Hügel, Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion (1st series; London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1931), p. 277.

limitations. How little man knows, or can know, of the vast world in which he lives. How obscure are the reasons for events, and how opaque is even the nearest future. Our highest speculations run out into contradiction and confusion,[1] and our wisest plans fail as often as they succeed. The traditional test of wisdom has been that of Socrates: to know how very little one really knows or can know.[2] How futile, then, to expect this feeble human mind to be able to reach and grasp the awesome and overwhelming reality of God, whose mystery and greatness compounds to an infinite degree the mystery and greatness of the world.

God conceived by way of abstraction.--A third consideration likewise suggests a reverent depreciation of man's ability to grasp God or judge God. In any advanced religion it is obvious that God is "spiritual" which means, at the very least, that He is not perceptible by the senses. Yet it is not at all evident that we have any knowledge except by sense or inference from sense perception. This was the conclusion of Thomas Aquinas, for example, and with him of official Roman Catholic theology.[3] On this assumption the mind may be able to infer from sense experience that God is; but as to

---

[1] The classic statement of this problem is found in Immanuel Kant, The Critique of Pure Reason, trans. by J. M. D. Meiklejohn (revised ed.; New York: The Colonial Press, 1900), Book II, chap. ii, "The Antinomy of Pure Reason," 230 ff. Cf. Richard Kroner, Culture and Faith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), chap. ii.

[2] Plato, Apology, 20, in Works of Plato, III, 105 f.

[3] John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (New York:

what He is, His essence or nature, it has not infrequently been concluded that it is possible only to say what He is not. That is, the idea of God is actually formulated chiefly by an intensive and rigorous process of abstraction from the characteristics of the phenomenal world. He is not like anything we can see, touch, or hear; He is that to which the mind points when it has stripped reality of all assignable qualities. Thus we have classic definitions of God in terms of pure Being,[1] or in even more rarefied terms, as the mysterious "ground of Being."[2] This means, in fact, that God becomes quite ineffable. He is a symbol of an ideal limit of abstraction toward which reason points but which it can never grasp. The most that can be said is that the truth about Him lies in a given direction.[3] But He is quite beyond our description or conception. This verdict of the abstrac-

---

Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), p. 109. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (2d and rev. ed.; London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1920), I. 2. 2. Also Summa Contra Gentiles, trans. English Dominican Fathers (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1924), I. 12.

[1] An extensive and sympathetic presentation of this point of view is given in Gilson, pp. 51 ff., 72 f. Cf. Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles, I. 14. To be sure, the Scholastic doctrine of God as Being is not in intention abstract, Gilson continually urges. The thought of God as actus purus intends to be concrete. But the determining ideas are such attributes as infinity, unity, simplicity, etc., metaphysical "perfections of God considered in Himself independent of all relation with the world." Matthews, p. 102, quoting Gaston Sortais, Traité de Philosophie, Tome II, 577.

[2] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 156.

[3] As in the Scholastic doctrine of analogy. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I. 12. 2. Valuable discussions of the

tive intelligence is, in turn, powerfully reinforced by much mystical experience, which is close to the heart of all living religion, and which likewise loves to deal with God in terms of the via negativa and to proclaim His ineffability.[1] Meister Eckhart, an outstanding exemplar of these two motives, expressed their implication in his dictum, "no distinction can exist, or is intelligible, in God Himself." "If I declare God good, it is as though I declared white black."[2]

The moral ambiguity of experience.--Finally, a fourth characteristic of human experience suggests that God is above and beyond our judgment and understanding. The world of nature and human history is to a terrible extent a moral chaos. Suffering, waste, frustration, loss, tragedy, death, and cruelty are pervasive characteristics. There seems to be no way of reading the record of cosmic evolution or of human exper-

---

doctrine of analogy are found in Emil Brunner, Dogmatics, Vol. II, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), pp. 21 ff., 42 ff.; and in Nels F. S. Ferré, The Christian Understanding of God (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951), pp. 67 ff.

[1] Cf. the discussion of Neoplatonism by Baron Friedrich von Hügel, The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends (2d ed.; London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1927), I, 23 ff.

[2] Quoted in von Hügel, Essays and Addresses, II, 153. One is reminded at this point of the saying attributed to Cardinal Newman, "Nothing is easier than to say 'God' and mean nothing by it"; quoted by John Whittier Darr, "The Meaning of God for an Average Man," in Lectures on the Meaning of God in Modern Life ("Scripps College Papers," Number 5; Claremont, Calif.: Scripps College, 1933), p. 3. An interesting discussion of the via negativa is found in Martin Foss, The Idea of Perfection in the Western World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), pp. 43 ff.

ience so as to find there general conformity to any moral criteria or norms which have been found widely apprehensible by the minds of men. To be sure, there is some measure of such conformity, but the total effect of experience and observation seems rather to mock than to confirm it. Our moral norms appear to be marginal, if not accidental, in a universe which is on the whole oblivious to them.

> Ah, Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire
> To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
> Would not we shatter it to bits--and then
> Re-mould it nearer to the Heart's Desire![1]

Yet religion is commonly committed to the view that God creates, orders, and governs this same universe. Does its moral ambiguity correspond to something characteristic of God's own nature and purpose? Few persons of religious concern would care--or dare--to call God "evil." Much more likely He might be thought merely indifferent or so far above us that our criteria for moral judgment simply do not apply to him. To be sure, where piety is lacking the mind readily proceeds to reject the whole notion of an almighty good God. David Hume concludes, in the words of his protagonist, "As the works of nature have a much greater analogy to the effects of _our_ art and contrivance, than to those of _our_ benevolence and justice; we have reason to infer that the natural attributes of the Deity have a greater resemblance to those of man, than his moral have to human vir-

---

[1] _Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Rendered into English Verse by Edward Fitzgerald_ (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1937), Stanza LXXIII, p. 77.

tues." Calvinist piety itself, however, could state no more exactly than does this skeptical philosopher the conclusion which centuries of religion have drawn from these puzzling facts: "As the supreme Being is allowed to be absolutely and entirely perfect, whatever differs most from him departs the farthest from the supreme standard of rectitude and perfection."[1] In other words, "good" as applied to God bears little if any discernible relation to the term as used in ordinary discourse. It is this disparity between the supreme power of God and the inequality of treatment which persons receive at the hands of history that constitutes what Troeltsch calls "an essential and fundamental religious and metaphysical problem" for the whole history of Christian thought.[2]

Summary.--Here, then, are four factors which converge to suggest that God is above and beyond human understanding and judgment: piety and mysticism, recognition of the limitations of reason, the result of intellectual abstraction in the search for God, and the moral ambiguity of the world and our experience. It is entirely natural, therefore, that in certain strands of Christianity, as in high religions of many cultures, we find it affirmed that God is not to be reached or grasped by reason but is given only in some kind of miracu-

---

[1] Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, ed. with an introduction by Norman Kemp Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), p. 270.

[2] Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, trans. Olive Wyon (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1950), I, 74.

lous revelation to which we can at best give active assent. His nature is above and beyond man's powers of inference and rational discrimination. He is ineffable, not subject to human description or judgment; He is an abyss for the mind. And likewise, He is a kind of abyss for the conscience, as it functions in terms of ordinary moral judgment. He is beyond our criticism or approval; the moral norms we can grasp are irrelevant to Him.

Motives for Relating God to Moral Norms

The deliverances of piety.--In spite of the force of these considerations, however, the extreme kind of transcendence just described has by no means been consistently attributed to God either in Christianity or in other high religions. There have been equally powerful interests tending in the opposite direction. "It is a fact of great significance," writes a Gifford Lecturer, "that the history of religions nowhere presents us with the phenomenon of a High God conceived as malevolent and definitely accepted by the worshipper as such."[1] An outstanding anthropologist offers the same verdict.

> Primitive man does not show much disposition to submit to an overwhelming destiny if it manifests itself simply in a neutral capacity. Thoroughly as he believes in the devil, he is not prepared to serve him. Nay, though surrounded with seemingly implacable forces, he imposes on the unknown his own moral demands and extorts an exhibition of worthiness as the price of his worship.[2]

---

[1] Lewis Richard Farnell, The Attributes of God ("Gifford Lectures," 1924-25; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925), p. 165.

[2] Marett, pp. 154 f.

McTaggart has, indeed, argued persuasively that man *must*, in the nature of the case, judge his God by his own humanly appreciated ideal. By implication, no God who failed in this judgment could survive as an object of worship.[1]

In the Biblical tradition, piety and mystical feeling have as often been concerned to insist upon the intimacy and kinship of God and man as upon God's glorification and exaltation.

> Thus says the high and exalted One,
> Who dwells enthroned for ever, and whose name is Holy:
> "I dwell enthroned on high, as the Holy One,
> But with him also that is contrite and humble in spirit."[2]

Rational norms seem universal.--Again, in spite of the obvious limitations of human reason, men have been unable to depreciate it completely. It is hard to believe that the apparently universal and necessary norms and laws of thought are not really such, even for God. How could mathematical truths, for example, fail to hold true for the divine mind as well as for our own?[3]

Religion and ethics traditionally connected.--Still further, the traditional and almost universal connection between religion and ethics as exhibited through history makes it difficult to believe that God is at once the ground and

---

[1] William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912), p. 211.

[2] Isaiah 57:15.

[3] This is the fundamental intuition that helps give Platonic realism its perennial strength.

sanction of those norms and judgments and laws which religiously-based morality seeks to enforce in the human sphere, and at the same time completely out of relation to them in His own nature and action. If it be God's will that men behave in certain ways, it seems necessary that it be His will consistently. But where consistent and sincere approval of a set of norms is posited, the foundation has already been laid for an ethical description of God, and even for a judgment concerning his relation to those norms.

Furthermore, the practical effect of extreme moral transcendence upon religiously sanctioned ethical seriousness is likely to be disastrous. "Shall not the judge of the whole earth himself act justly?"[1] is a universal question. And if He need not, then why should I, and why should He judge me;or indeed, how *can* He judge me since He does not take seriously any norms by which to make the judgment. This was the verdict of James Mill. He regarded conventional religion as "the greatest enemy of morality," because it radically vitiates the standard of ethics, "making it consist in doing the will of a being, on whom it lavishes indeed all the phrases of adulation, but whom in sober truth it depicts as eminently hateful."[2]

Practical difficulties in moral transcendence.--[3] Fur-

---

[1] Genesis 18:25.

[2] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1873), p. 40.

[3] Cf. the statement on the practical function of theology in Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, I, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950), pp. 78 ff.

thermore, there are large practical difficulties involved in the consistent affirmation of the epistemological and moral transcendence of God. To make God sheerly ineffable becomes a grave obstacle to fruitful piety for all but the most "metaphysical" souls. To make man's mind quite incapable of reaching or grasping any valid knowledge of God creates enormous difficulties for preaching and for apologetics, for the practical task of convincing men of the truth of religion. It must be noted that this is not simply the question of religious knowledge by "reason" or by "revelation," but rather whether genuine knowledge of the moral character of God is apprehensible by the mind in whatever way it may be attained or given.

Furthermore, the effort to establish any basis for discrimination between true and false gospels is undercut. The evangelist and theologian are reduced simply to the method of authority (i.e., "It is so, because God says so," meaning by "God", "my church" or "my book" or just "me"), or the method of tenacity ("It is so, because it is so!"), procedures of very limited efficacy.

It is quite understandable, therefore, why the motives and facts making for such an extreme transcendence of God as we have sketched have throughout the history of religion been balanced by equally powerful facts and motives operating against it. The result is that theologies have generally exhibited a tension between the opposing tendencies and have struck some sort of balance between them. Within Christian thought the major strands of tradition may in part at least

be recognized and classified according to the varying ways in which they face and solve this problem of doing justice to both sides of the religious consciousness: that making for divine transcendence of human moral judgment, and that which seeks to define the supreme value of the divine in terms of moral goodness.

Moral Transcendence in Protestant Thought

This study concentrates upon the idea of the goodness of God in the Protestant tradition for several reasons. First, some limitation of the field is necessary for no work of this scale could do justice to the entire mass of Patristic, Roman, Orthodox, and Protestant thought on the subject. Second, the writer stands within the Protestant tradition, gives it his allegiance and believes that it embodies the truest expression of Christianity. Hence it is for him the most important of the major strands of our faith. Third, it is a somewhat surprising fact that Protestantism has often given most vigorous expression to the tendency in favor of the kind of divine transcendence in which chief attention is paid to God's metaphysical excellence, and his relation to moral goodness is rendered ambiguous. This tendency is especially striking in classic documents of the Reformation period, in another way in the philosophical theology connected with Schleiermacher and German Idealism, and again in the neo-orthodox movement of the twentieth century which drew its inspiration so largely from a rediscovery of the

Reformation. Certain reasons why this should have been so are not far to seek.

The Reformation rebellion against the Roman system.--The Reformation, to begin with, was fundamentally a rebellion. It did not claim to be in any sense a new revelation or a new religion. Rather, it sought in conscious opposition to the existing official system of Roman Christianity to recover what it believed to be original and essential--generally speaking, Biblical--Christianity. The vigorous opposition of the Reformers to "prophets" and sects who did claim a new revelation, and the preoccupation of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin with criticism of the existing church are broad indications of the truth of this judgment.

The official Roman Christianity of the sixteenth century was on the whole remarkably systematic and rational, upon the basis of its own presuppositions. Its doctrine had been given elaborately deductive statement in enormous and closely-argued Summae. Its hierarchical organization was thoroughly rationalized, and this was in turn the agency for the operation of a highly systematic, practical scheme of religious observance, the sacramental and penitential system of medieval Catholicism. In this system all the interests and motives and experiences of life had their assigned place. All were knit together in an order which maintained sins and satisfactions, nature and grace, revelation and reason, heaven

and the world in reciprocal and fruitful balance.[1]

The God who was the theoretical head and fount of the entire orderly complex was Himself a model of rational order. As authoritatively defined by a theologian whose thought then had commanding weight, if not the virtually supernatural sanction which it now enjoys, God's very nature was reason.[2] It was from His orderly will that the church and its whole system of life and thought sprang, a presumably accurate reflection of that will and nature. The net result was that God Himself, absolute and transcendent as He might be in certain metaphysical respects, was for all practical and moral purposes described and even morally bound by the ordered and rational structure of the Christian system.

It was first of all this assumption that God Himself was in some sense adequately represented by, and His grace delivered over to, such a system, represented in its extreme logic by the theory and sale of indulgences, for example, that the Reformation denied. Against this whole procedure of cataloging and describing and binding and even selling God and His grace, the Reformers reacted in a violent insistence upon His moral transcendence. The cardinal Reformation doc-

---

[1] Cf. Henry Osborn Taylor, "The Mediaeval Synthesis," *The Mediaeval Mind, A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1911), II, chap. xliii.

For a warning against holding this system to be entirely solid and complete cf. Gordon Rupp, *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms, 1521* (Chicago: Wilson and Follett Co., 1951), pp. 50 f.

[2] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I. 14. 4.

trines of the divine freedom, of absolute predestination and election, of justification by faith alone, of the right of private judgment, and of the sole ultimate authority of the positively given Word of God in the Scriptures, all reflect the rejection of a rationalism which attempted to set limits to God's sovereign freedom of action and to domesticate His will so that men could both understand and manipulate it.[1]

A revival of piety led to the exaltation of God.--Another motive combined with the first to reinforce this tendency to repudiate a rationally discernible and definable God in favor of a highly transcendent one. The Reformation was not only an ecclesiastical and intellectual rebellion but it was also a religious revival. Indeed, the two sides are inseparable: a renewed religious sensitivity and depth of piety furnished the chief motivation for the reforming movement itself. And once again the tendency of keen piety to issue in an extreme exaltation of God had its effect. Luther's trembling at his first celebration of the mass[2] matched the characteristic emphasis by Calvin upon the sovereign glory of God. To be sure, for both men the gra-

---

[1] Cf. R. Pascal, The Social Basis of the German Reformation, Martin Luther and His Times (London: Watts & Co., 1933), pp. 33 f. Heinrich Boehmer, Luther and the Reformation in the Light of Modern Research, trans. E. S. G. Potter (New York: Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press, 1930), p. 98.

[2] Roland H. Bainton, Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950), p. 41, citing Dokumente Luthers Entwicklung, ed. Otto Scheel, (1929), p. 201.

cious saving work of God through Christ was the focus of their thought.[1] Yet so far as their piety suggested a concept of *God* Himself, the generalization will stand.

The depreciation of man.--A third characteristic of Reformation life and thought was the depreciation of man, his capacities and his goodness. This was in part a valid, fresh discovery of a truth which had deep historic roots in the Christian tradition. It was at the same time a very practical way of countering Catholic optimism about man's capacity to earn salvation within a system of works and penances. The result was to cast radical doubt upon the value and validity of human understanding in any theological sphere. How could man's mind, so feeble and corrupt, presume to judge God or to hold toward his sovereign and inscrutable will any attitude but one of acceptance and affirmation?

The view that Protestantism, at least in its classical and integral form, is particularly connected with a view of God in which extreme transcendence makes His moral goodness ambiguous has become something of a commonplace. Santayana, for example, gives it characteristically vivid and eloquent expression--and at the same time offers a verdict upon it which would be widely shared by secular thinkers:

> If in other respects Protestant sentiment often seems to me rather a religious cloak for worldliness, as to the

---

[1] For Luther, see *infra*, pp. 93 f. For Calvin, cf. Francois Wendel, *Calvin, Sources et Évolution de sa Pensée Religieuse* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), pp. 161 ff.

> nature of faith it seems to me admirable and profound. For. . .it means an unspoken and sacrificial trust in an unfathomable power; not, in the deeper souls, confidence that we shall materially or personally prosper under it, or be publicly vindicated or saved, but rather willingness to have been born, to have drunk our cup to the dregs, and even to be eternally damned, because such was the will of God, intent on his own glory. Worship of this non-moral absolute Will seems to me canine and slavish, and excusable only as the sheer greatness of this universal power carries us with it dramatically. . . . This is a precarious aesthetic or intellectual rapture on which it would be rash and unmoral to build our religion; but faith and trust in that universal dispensation are signs of healthy life.[1]

Vigorously as one might like to dissent from Santayana's labelling such a deity the "Calvinist" God,[2] there can be no doubt that he here puts his finger on one dominant characteristic of the God of Reformation theology as a coolly dispassionate observer might see Him. The brilliant book of Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism,[3] tracing the "decline" from integral Calvinistic thought to the nineteenth century liberalism which replaced it in New England, clearly suggests by its title as well as by its argument almost precisely the same view of a "Calvinistic" God as Santayana's. And this by an avowed and eloquent exponent of Calvinism.

---

[1] George Santayana, "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," The Philosophy of George Santayana, ed. P. A. Schilpp ("The Library of Living Philosophers"; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1940), p. 588.

[2] As he does, ibid., p. 498.

[3] Joseph Haroutunian, Piety Versus Moralism, The Passing of the New England Theology (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932).

Divine Impassibility and Divine Goodness

The assertion that there is a particularly significant problem of divine transcendence in Protestant thought needs clarification, however, in one further respect. Patristic and Scholastic thought rather more consistently than Protestant theology seem to have portrayed God in terms which make doubtful his moral goodness by emphasizing His _impassibility_. This means that His experience is one of constant bliss in the very highest degree, and that He cannot suffer nor indeed feel anything in reaction to events in the created sphere. This impassibility is grounded partly upon the extreme metaphysical transcendence characteristic of Hellenistic thought in general and of Neoplatonism in particular, and carried over from that source into Christianity.[1] Such transcendence makes impossible any real direct contact between God and the world, and the theory of divine impassibility to which it gives rise, seems to amount, for all practical purposes, to that "unconcern" of God which we noted earlier as one of the possible ways in which God might be conceived as (un)related to moral norms.

Such a view is not expressed with full clarity in the chief Patristic source of Western theology, Augustine, because he attempts to combine certain ethical and religious characteristics of God, and hence to assign Him certain relations to

---

[1] Cf. W. R. Inge, "Neo-Platonism," _Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics_, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), IX, 307 ff. The similarity with the Epicurean doctrine noted earlier is unmistakable.

the world which are not readily compatible with the metaphysical attributes which he assumes--self-sufficiency, absolute transcendence, and the like.[1] The logical connection between metaphysical transcendence and impassibility is seen most clearly, perhaps, in De Divisione Naturae of the enormously influential John Scotus Erigena. Here it is unequivocally affirmed that "in truth God neither acts nor is acted upon, neither moves nor is moved, neither loves nor is loved."[2] As a matter of fact, no category can apply to God in terms of the rigorously logical transcendence which is assumed.[3]

Aquinas arrives at much the same result from an application of Aristotelian rather than Neoplatonic categories. He argued

> that there is some first being, whom we call God; and that this first being must be pure act, without the admixture of any potentiality, for the reason that, absolutely, potentiality is posterior to act. Now everything which is in any way changed, is in some way in potentiality. Hence it is evident that it is impossible for God to be in any way changeable.[4]

Hence God cannot be acted upon in any respect by something else.[5] The divine simplicity, immutability, impassibility, and self-sufficiency of traditional creedal and theological

---

[1] J. K. Mozley, The Impassibility of God, A Survey of Christian Thought (Cambridge: University Press, 1926), pp. 104-9.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 110, quoting De Divisione Naturae, p. 504, sec. 62 B.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 111 citing p. 518, sec. 72 B.

[4] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I. 9. 1.

[5] *Ibid.*, I. 25. 1.

language[1] are all aspects of one self-consistent view which raises God above all change where He "rejoices by an operation that is one and simple," as Aristotle says.[2]

Does not the ascription to God of such unsullied changelessness and bliss amount to the affirmation of a kind of transcendent divine unconcern which removes God from any real relation to moral norms or criteria? To be sure, a certain type of piety finds all this quite compatible with a view of God as living, personal, and in the highest degree moral. Classic expression is given this conviction by Baron Friedrich von Hügel in his essay on "Suffering and God."[3] Yet von Hügel is impelled to ascribe "deep Sympathy" to God, as well as "deep Suffering" to Christ,[4] and it is difficult to see how there can be sympathy in any meaningful sense without some genuine participation in and suffering with the difficulties of another. And without this, how can there be any real concern for or relation to the moral values involved in human situations of moral significance?[5]

It appears, then, that the traditional metaphysical attributes of God mean that He is "beyond good and evil," at

---

[1] Cf. e.g., Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873) I, chap. v.

[2] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I. 20. 1.

[3] von Hügel, Essays and Addresses, II, 165 ff.

[4] Ibid., p. 209.

[5] Cf. the convincing discussion of this point by Charles Hartshorne, "Tragic and Sublime Aspects of Christian Love," Journal of Liberal Religion, VIII, (Summer, 1946), 37 f.

least in the sense of being supremely unconcerned about moral issues and hence of being without essential relation to moral norms. This would mean that moral transcendence is a problem in Catholic as well as in Protestant theology. But we must note here, in anticipation of the analysis to follow, that in theory at least, most official Protestant theology has clung to the very same metaphysical attributes as those of the Neoplatonist and Aristotelian theologians of the older tradition, and so to that extent shares that precise aspect of the problem with Catholic thought.[1] In respect to the doctrines of God and the world

> "the philosophical element in the new Scholasticism. . . was practically taken over bodily from Mediaevalism, and in reality presents no new growth when compared with its predecessor. . . .We have merely a statement of what may be called in modern phrase 'the approved results' of the earlier scholastic investigations, and of these alone."[2]

Characteristically, however, Protestant theology has worked with a more free and personal, less metaphysical and rational, concept of God.[3] Hence our task will be not so much to examine the bearings of divine impassibility upon the relation of God to moral norms as to see the significance of certain other key doctrines more typical of Protestant thought.

---

[1] Mozley, p. 119.

[2] Matthews, God in Christian Experience, p. 105, quoting R. S. Franks, "Dogma in Protestant Scholasticism," Dogma [Nisbet], p. 115. It is curious to find the dean of conservative Calvinists sharing this same judgment; Hodge, I, 394.

[3] It has certainly paid less attention to the doctrine of impassibility as such; Mozley, pp. 120 ff.

Wider Bearings of The Topic

It may be worth noting, in concluding this section, that the question of the moral as well as metaphysical goodness of God is something of a key to the wider problem of divine transcendence in general. It is relatively easy for theology to affirm with mystical and evangelical piety that God is "beyond our highest thought." That this is partially true is so clear that the question as to whether it is fully and broadly true is easily overlooked or confused. But it is desperately hard to say, clearly and unequivocally, that God is "beyond good and evil," as we understand them. Yet both these affirmations stem from the same general complex of motives, as we have seen. If moral transcendence can really be sustained, it leaves epistemological transcendence almost obviously true, because of the latter's much greater initial plausibility.

On the other hand, in the degree to which moral transcendence cannot be sustained, it then becomes clear that God is at least to that degree morally "rational," i.e., understandable, consistent, orderly. And if He is "rational," accessible to that extent to human intelligence, the presumption might well be that He is thus accessible in other respects as well.

Treatment of The Topic

Although the specification of the topic as concerned primarily with the Protestant tradition sharply reduces the

otherwise utterly unmanageable mass of materials involved in its treatment, yet it still remains impossible in such a study as this, which is primarily a systematic and constructive effort rather than an historical investigation, to survey adequately the entire body of Protestant theology. Analysis has shown, moreover, that for the clarification of the subject in hand the most important points of view can be quite adequately set forth from the work of a relatively few major thinkers.

The Thinkers Selected for Analysis

The men chosen for special attention have been selected according to these criteria:

1. Together they must sum up the various important alternative ways of dealing with the idea of the goodness of God.

2. Each of them must represent a substantial portion of the Protestant community, both by his intent to be "orthodox" in the sense of conscious loyalty to what he conceived to be the mind of the church or at least the most authentic section of it, and because of the creative power of his thought which enabled him actually to shape and define the doctrine of a significant section of Protestantism.

The Structure of the Historical Analysis

A certain group of questions has been found particularly useful in discovering the real thought, express or implicit, of these theologians with respect to God's moral goodness. Not all are applicable in each case, since the thinker

under scrutiny may not necessarily say anything at all about some of them. Yet together they provide a convenient and relatively complete basis for our examination. The questions are these:

1. What is said directly about the goodness of God? What character is given Him? Is his excellence chiefly moral or metaphysical? God is always called "loving, righteous, good, just," etc. The problem is to relate such statements to other affirmations; to see what they mean in their context, and to assess their weight in the total system of thought.

2. What is God's specific relation to moral norms? The pertinence of this is obvious, and if sufficient evidence of this direct sort could be found little else would be necessary. In fact, very little is to be found, in most cases; and what is said is often in tension with other statements. Hence it is necessary to examine other questions, whose implications bear directly on the topic.

3. What is said about the problem of evil? Is God responsible for physical or moral evil? Here the question of human freedom and of divine Providence or causality are involved.

4. What is the doctrine of grace and of election? To what extent is God responsible for the determination of the destiny of souls, here and hereafter, to salvation or sin, heaven or hell?

5. What is the doctrine of creation, and of the creator? What implications are drawn therefrom? Here the chief

problem is to discover the extent to which the unique status of God as creator is thought to give Him a "privileged" position in respect to moral norms.

6. What is said about the sovereignty or freedom of God? What is the nature and role of the divine Will?

7. What is God's relation to reason and to rational criteria? There is a close and necessary relation between moral and rational order, between the judgments of the mind and of the conscience. They are not identical, at least not at all points; yet they are so closely interrelated that a thinker's attitude toward one is a good clue to his attitude toward the other.

8. What is God's relation to law? Insofar as any orderly system of moral judgments inevitably lends itself to statement in the form of laws, and in the human realm at least the binding force of moral ideas is usually expressed by the category of law, the relevance of this question is obvious. Here the very significant cognate questions of the meaning of divine justice and of the nature of divine forgiveness or justification are involved. Does God express, or contravene, humanly understood moral norms in these areas?

9. What is said concerning knowledge of God? Is there an agnostic emphasis on the hiddenness, mystery, "otherness" of Deity, which makes the asking of any questions about Him futile? Or is there valid analogy between man and God, and real possibility of knowledge and understanding?

Systematic Analysis and Constructive Statement

An attempt will be made, following the completion of the historical survey, to gather up its lessons. There will be several of these: (a) an understanding of the major positions which Protestant thought has taken in regard to the divine goodness; (b) an appreciation of the ramifications of the topic, and of the way in which types of thought on various major doctrines are generally related to a given point of view on this one; (c) a knowledge of the various factors which have, within the Protestant tradition, been most influential in making the divine goodness ambiguous; (d) a sense of the general direction of religious experience as it confronts the twin absolutes of God and of moral insight.

With this material in hand a positive statement of the meaning of the goodness of God will be attempted. The major categories of thought which are exhibited by the historical systems will be examined for their suitability to serve as bases for a view in which the glory of God and His moral excellence are combined without contradiction and without the covert overwhelming of one by the other.

CHAPTER II

MARTIN LUTHER

Page

Luther's Fundamental Apprehension of God 38

The Majesty of God
Craving for Assurance
The Divine Mystery

The Doctrine of a Hidden God 43

God and Moral Norms: Specific Statements. . . . 48

The Sovereign Freedom of God 49

God and Reason 53

God and Law. 62

Medieval Background and Luther's Reaction
Luther on Natural Law
Theological Significance of Law

Justification, and the Justice of God. 69

The Justice of God
Atonement
Justification and Forgiveness

Predestination 76

Providence, or the Divine Causality. 81

God and Evil 86

External or Physical Evil
Dualism

God's Moral Character: His Goodness 93

Wrath and Love
The Divine Goodness

Summary and Conclusions. 97

CHAPTER II

MARTIN LUTHER

Luther is not only the first great Protestant theologian. He is in many respects the most important as well. It was from his writing and preaching that the most significant elements of the Reformation caught fire.[1] The extraordinary vigor and range of his thought is reflected in our discussion, which has to take account of his point of view on nearly all the major topics which bear upon the goodness of God. At the same time this vigor, range, and depth create problems of understanding and interpretation. His writing was great because of its profusion, depth, and eloquence, not its order. The enormous output of his pen flowed mostly white-hot and in haste. "I know no better tonic for me than anger. If I wish to write, pray, or preach well, then I need to become angry; thus all my being is refreshed, my wits are sharpened, and all temptations flee."[2] The result is, that with

---

[1] Cf. Calvin, in a letter to Melanchthon, June 28, 1545: "We all owe the greatest thanks to Luther, and I should cheerfully concede him the highest authority, if he only knew how to control himself"; quoted in Philip Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, With a History and Critical Notes (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1877), I, 260 f., n.1. In his "Reply to Sadoleto" Calvin seems to refer to Luther as starting the "very different form of doctrine" which materially affected his religious life; quoted in Williston Walker, John Calvin, The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), p. 75.

[2] Preserved Smith and Herbert Percival Gallinger,

all their bulk, his writings give us but the "fragments of a great confession."[1] Luther himself wished at times that he could recall most of what he had written because it was so "desultory and unpolished."[2]

Most important of all is the fact that Luther throughout his life wrote out of inner tension and struggle. The great exponent of sola fide never found the kind of assurance which makes for consistent and limpid exposition.

> When Anastasia, then four years old, was prattling of Christ, angels and heaven, Luther said, "My dear child, if only we could hold fast to this faith."
>
> "Why, papa," said she, "don't you believe it?"
>
> Luther commented:
>
> . . . .Who among men can understand the full meaning of this word of God, "Our Father, Who art in heaven"? Anyone who genuinely believes these words will often say, "I am the Lord of heaven and earth, and all that is therein. The Angel Gabriel is my servant, Raphael is my guardian, and the angels in my every need are ministering spirits". . . .And while I am affirming this faith, my Father suffers me to be thrown into prison, drowned, or beheaded. Then faith falters and in weakness I cry, "Who knows whether it is true?"[3]

Luther's Fundamental Apprehension of God

This paradox of co-existing faith and doubt arises directly out of the unsurpassed depth and intensity of Luther's

---

Conversations with Luther, Selections from the Tabletalk (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1915), pp. 137 f.

[1] Boehmer, p. 32.

[2] Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr., (ed.), A Compend of Luther's Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. x.

[3] Bainton, pp. 364 f., quoting Tischreden, 2047, in Weimar Ausgabe (Weimar edition of Luther's works; hereafter referred to as WA).

piety. His unusual religious sensitivity led him while still a monk thrice to make a General Confession and sometimes to confess twice a day; and this abnormally tender conscience and vivid apprehension of the divine holiness seems to have been a decisive factor in his break with the medieval system of piety.[1] The spirit of his own religious life, partially formed by such intensely inward and aspiring late medieval mysticism as that of the Theologica Germanica,[2] finds beautiful expression in a comment on the New Testament:

> It is a great matter, to be a Christian man, and to have a hidden life, hidden away, not in some place like a hermit, nor in his own heart, though that is an unsearchable depth, but in the invisible God himself, and to live thus in the world, but to feed on that which is never seen, except by way of the Word.[3]

We must note, however, that this intense inwardness was anchored in a complete attachment to the historical revelation as embodied in the Bible. His dependence on the objective Word made Luther not only suspicious of all "prophets" and "revelations" but also concerned in his exposition to be faithful to the letter of Scripture--at least that part of it which he considered important![4] Some of his statements seem

---

[1] Boehmer, p. 58; even the Catholic scholar Lortz admitted Luther's approach to religion to be so poignantly serious as to make Thomism seem cold and "correct"; cited by Rupp, p. 103.

[2] Of which Luther published the first edition, in 1516; Thomas S. Kepler (ed.), Theologica Germanica, The Way to a Sinless Life (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1952), p. 28. Cf. Boehmer's comments on Luther's relation to mysticism, pp. 73 ff.

[3] Rupp, p. 47, quoting Commentary on Hebrews, ed. Hirsch (Berlin: Ruckert, 1929), p. 235.

[4] Bainton tellingly makes this point, p. 261. We can-

best explained by this Biblicism, operating at times in tension with the impulse of his own piety.

Such a background of intense and personal piety makes intelligible Luther's reprehension of the soteriological bookkeeping and shallow mechanical *securitas de salute futura* engendered by the Roman religious system, typified at its worst in the sale of indulgences. It also helps explain the violence of his affirmation of *sola gratia*, so central to all his systematic thought.[1]

The Majesty of God

The apprehension of God to which such piety pointed was characterized first of all by a shattering sense of abasement before the awful divine majesty, a perspective from which a thinker like Erasmus seemed frivolous and trifling.[2] His famous account of being "stupefied and terror-stricken" at his first celebration of the mass tells the story:

> I thought to myself, "With what tongue shall I address such Majesty, seeing that all men ought to tremble in the presence of even an earthly prince? Who am I, that

---

not here go into the problem of Luther's doctrine of Scripture and of the Holy Spirit, though both these limit the generalization just made. Cf. on the Holy Spirit, *The Works of Martin Luther*, with Introduction and Notes (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915), III, 127; *On the Bondage of the Will, Written in Answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus on Free-Will*, trans. Henry Cole (London: T. Bensley, 1823), pp. 12, 90. On the Scriptures, cf. the Introductions and Prefaces to the books of the Bible in *Works*, VI, 367 ff.

[1] Cf. the discussion in Boehmer, pp. 98, 102; and Edgar M. Carlson, *The Reinterpretation of Luther* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948), pp. 119 f.

[2] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, pp. 10 ff.; Smith and Gallinger, p. 112.

> I should lift up mine eyes or raise my hands to the divine Majesty? The angels surround him. At his nod the earth trembles. And shall I, a miserable little pygmy, say, 'I want this, I ask for that'? For I am dust and ashes and full of sin and I am speaking to the living, eternal and the true God."[1]

The strong note here of "metaphysical" piety in the presence of the sheer power, immensity, and glory of the cosmic deity fits in with other testimony to Luther's sensitivity to the "depth" of nature.[2] But even more characteristic is the specifically religious fear of God, exhibited in many sayings which are at least partly autobiographical. Thus, he spoke of suffering torments

> so great and infernal. . .that if they were completed, or lasted half an hour, or even the tenth part of an hour, he would utterly perish, and his bones be reduced to ashes. Then God appears horrifyingly angry and with him, the whole creation. . . .The soul cannot believe it can ever be redeemed, but that it is suffering a punishment not yet complete, . . .and left only with the naked longing for help, and terrifying trembling.[3]

---

[1] Bainton, p. 41, quoting Dokumente zu Luthers Entwicklung, ed. Otto Scheel (1929), p. 201.

[2] Bainton, pp. 216 f., 221.

[3] Rupp, pp. 29 f., quoting WA 1, 558; Cf. other citations in Rupp, pp. 29-31, and in Bainton, pp. 41, 44, 57, 135. How much this fear came from the doctrine of God Luther had been taught, especially by the late nominalist Scholastics, and how much of it sprang from his own spiritual nature and its quests is difficult to answer. On the Scholastic influence cf. Boehmer, pp. 55-89; C. G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Times (St. Louis: Concordia Press, 1950), pp. 135, 168 ff.; Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, trans. Philip S. Watson (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1939), Part II, Vol. II, pp. 475 ff.; R. H. Fife, Young Luther--The Intellectual and Religious Development of Martin Luther to 1518 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), pp. 57-70, 116, 124, 163, 173, 190-2, 207. Rupp, pp. 18 ff., however, cautions against the rather sweeping generalizations regarding this influence in older historians. Cf. also Luther, Works, II, 144, 187 ff.; IV, 347.

Craving for Assurance

Naturally, then, Luther's piety came to a focus in the overwhelming craving for just that assurance of salvation which the divine majesty made so elusive and his fear so indispensable.[1] Unlike his mystical preceptors he never accepted the counsel of complete abandonment before God. He could affirm that the soul might come to the point of being willing to be damned by the will of God--but such a willingness would itself be a testimony of grace and of assurance of election![2] Therefore the Gospel is the "good tidings of the forgiveness of sins,"[3] the proclamation that "faith in Christ overcomes sin, death, and hell, and gives life, righteousness, and salvation."[4] And yet, although such craving for assurance and such faith in the Gospel issued in the triumphant power of "Ein' Feste Burg," Luther never won complete satisfaction, as we have seen. Doubts continued, and fears which he thought "the very pains of hell itself."[5]

The Divine Mystery

Another factor correlative with the two just discussed and perhaps even more fundamental than either is a third

---

[1] Jacques Maritain, Three Reformers, Luther, Descartes, Rousseau (London: Sheed and Ward, 1947), p. 6, tellingly (and exaggeratedly) stresses this point.

[2] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 57; cf. Rupp, p. 42.

[3] Luther, Works, II, 217; cf. 199 f.

[4] Ibid., VI, 443. [5] Ibid., III, 39; Bainton, p. 361.

element in Luther's piety: the numinous mystery of God. Few themes receive more ample statement than this. One of his first grievances against Rome was its "frivolous presumption" in trying to penetrate the divine mysteries.[1] Only a "poor, simple God" could be expected to give an account of his works and actions.[2] "The reason of the divine will is not to be inquired into, but simply to be adored."[3] Luther taught that it is necessary to know _that_ God orders all things by His omnipotence;[4] but he urged great circumspection in trying to determine _what_ His will for one is.[5]

The Doctrine of a Hidden God

These factors, and perhaps others, led Luther to his famous doctrine of the double aspect of God, as hidden and as revealed, _deus absconditus_ and _deus revelatus_. There is a "PREACHED AND OFFERED MERCY OF GOD," and "A SECRET AND TO BE FEARED WILL OF GOD," which is not to be curiously inquired into but

---

[1] Luther, _Works_, I, 390. The Scholastics, to be sure, had left an incomprehensible residue of mystery in God, but their doctrine of the _analogia entis_ limited it far more sharply than was agreeable to Luther; cf. Carlson, p. 146; Robert L. Calhoun, _Lectures on the History of Christian Doctrine_ (privately circulated), pp. 308 f.

[2] Martin Luther, _The Table-talk_, trans. William Hazlitt (Revised ed.; Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, n.d.), #LXVI.

[3] Luther, _Bondage of the Will_, pp. 56 f.; cf. pp. 168, 214, 371; _Works_, II, 141 f.

[4] Luther, _Bondage of the Will_, pp. 23 f.

[5] Smith and Gallinger, pp. 135 ff.

> adored with reverence as the most profound SECRET of the divine Majesty, which he reserves unto himself and keeps hidden from us.
>
> . . . .
>
> We are to argue in one way, concerning the WILL OF GOD preached, revealed, and offered unto us, and worshipped by us; and in another, concerning GOD HIMSELF not preached, not revealed, not offered unto us, and worshipped by us. In whatever, therefore, God hides himself and will be unknown by us, that is nothing unto us: and here, that sentiment stands good--'What is above us, does not concern us.'
>
> . . . .
>
> God, therefore, is to be left to remain in his own nature and majesty; for in this respect, we have nothing to do with him, nor does he wish us to have. . .but we have to do with him as far as he is clothed in, and delivered to us by, his word. . . .God does many things which he does not make known unto us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not in his word make known unto us that he wills. Thus, he does not 'will the death of a sinner,' that is, *in his word*; *but he wills it* by that *will inscrutable*. But. . .we are to consider his word *only*, and to leave that will inscrutable. . . .It is enough to know only, that there is in God a certain will inscrutable: but *what*, *why*, and *how far* that will wills, it is not *lawful* to inquire.[1]

This passage and others like it[2] suggest two problems. One is epistemological: how much can we know of God, by reason or revelation or both? The other is moral and theological in the strict sense: i.e., what is the *character* of the God who exhibits this hidden aspect? Is the hidden God with His awful and apparently unaccountable power the *real* God? Or is the God of the revelation fundamental, and the mystery secondary? This question comes very near to the heart of our study of the divine goodness.

On the face of it, the answer seems clear. The *deus absconditus* is the real God, "in his own nature and majesty,"

---

[1] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, pp. 156-159.

[2] Cf. the citations by Bainton, pp. 218 f.

the locus of "the most profound SECRET" of the deity.[1] He does and wills things of which He gives an account in His Word, but these are only a selected portion of the total number of things He wills and does, many of which He specifically does not make known, and which may run counter to His proclaimed mercy--e.g., "the death of a sinner."[2]

From this one might well conclude that the doctrine of the hidden God is simply Luther's way of saying that God in Himself is beyond good and evil, not subject either to our understanding nor to our moral judgment and far above all humanly perceived moral criteria and norms. In His Word, then, is made known His inexplicable and essentially arbitrary will to be gracious and loving to a certain number who are able to hear His promise with faith. But this love is by virtue of its partiality ultimately swallowed up in the mystery too.

From such a simple reading of the doctrine, many Luther scholars dissent. Aulén, for example, finds four meanings in the deus absconditus, three of them quite remote from this. Yet the fourth actually undercuts the others and recurs to the point of view just suggested, for he says that the notion of deus absconditus

> guards against every anthropocentric-eudaemonistic way of thinking. It forbids man to seek to interpret the ways of God from the view-point of his own interest. To arrive at a view of God that would be satisfying to man would mean that human standards had been applied to God. Luther is quoted to the effect that if the divine character could justify itself before human standards, it

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 157.

[2] Ibid., p. 158.

would cease to be divine.[1]

In other words, apparently by virtue of the assumption that human standards must represent simply "human interests," Aulén seems to concur with Luther that God, to be God, must be beyond all humanly appreciated moral criteria.

Brunner makes a very careful study of this dualism of the hidden and revealed God, feeling that it is absolutely central to the Reformation understanding of faith. He finds that Luther begins with the idea that true, valid, knowledge of God is gained in His revelation through Christ and only there. In Christ He is seen as He really is, as love. Redemption, then, is God's "proper work," His opus proprium. But He can redeem, give faith, only after sinful man repents, i.e., places himself under God's judgment. Thus, to do His proper work God must first do a "strange work," an opus alienum, in which He shows Himself and acts as the wrathful God. If man repents the strange work becomes in truth a work of grace and love; if he remains impenitent there abides upon him the wrath of God as a continuing and terrible reality.[2]

Since outside of Christ man always stands under wrath, all philosophical or natural speculation about God has to do only with the deus absconditus, who is at the same time the deus absolutus, an impenetrable mystery and the "enemy of human nature." Here another meaning of the "hidden God" appears. From the standpoint of the awful majesty of the abso-

---

[1] Carlson, pp. 147 f., quoting Den Kristna gudsbilden.

[2] Brunner, Doctrine of God, pp. 168 ff.

lute God the revelation in Christ is a gracious "veiling." Hence the absolute God is also the deus nudus, as against the deus velatus of the revelation.[1]

Here we recur again to the critical question already indicated: is the ultimate truth represented by the idea of the hidden God who is in His naked reality the God of intolerable majesty and arbitrary wrathful will? Brunner denies this, so far as Luther's final thought is concerned. Up to 1525, the time of writing On the Bondage of the Will, Luther did hold this view. The objective truth of the potestas absoluta of God in himself was correlative with the doctrine of a double decree to salvation and reprobation. Later, Brunner believes, Luther gave up the double decree, thus indicating that he finally had come to see that God "in himself" must be identical with that which He is for us in His authentic revelation.[2] Whether this is in fact the case depends upon the validity of this theory of a fundamental change in Luther's view of predestination, a problem we shall discuss presently.[3]

In any event, Brunner's analysis clearly substantiates the thesis we have suggested: that the idea of the hidden God, if taken seriously as representing an aspect of the divine being genuinely and permanently other than that presented in the revelation of grace, leads straight to the conclusion that

---

[1] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 171.

[2] Ibid., pp. 173 f.

[3] Infra, pp. 76 ff.

God is beyond any essential relation to moral norms. Luther can be so read as to support such a view; but there is at least equally strong evidence against according it final validity. The question cannot be settled without reference to a wider framework of evidence.

God and Moral Norms: Specific Statements

A survey of the major sources for Luther's thought discloses very few specific statements regarding the relation of God to moral norms. Since these few nearly all come from his polemical On the Bondage of the Will, they are, as might be expected, denials that God is subject to human moral judgments or to any apprehensible moral norms.

> God is that being, for whose will no cause or reason is to be assigned, as a rule or standard by which it acts; seeing that, nothing is superior or equal to it, but it is itself the rule of all things. For if it acted by any rule or standard, or from any cause or reason, it would be no longer the Will of GOD. Wherefore, what God wills, is not therefore right, because he ought or ever was bound so to will; but on the contrary, what takes place is therefore right, because he so wills.[1]

This sounds, to be sure, like the doctrine of the absolute will of God as taught by Duns Scotus and William of Occam, in which Luther was trained. The sharp, pat phraseology suggests its descent from a well-known Scholastic tradition. Yet whatever the role of tradition in suggesting it, the doctrine is certainly congruent with much else in Luther's thought. He states his contempt for the opposite opinion re-

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 215.

ceived of "so many men renowned for talent":

> They require, that God should act according to human laws, and do what seems right unto men, or cease to be God! 'His secrets of Majesty, say they, do not better his character in our estimation. Let him render a reason why he is God, or why he wills and does that, which has no appearance of justice in it. It is as if one should ask a cobbler or a collarmaker to take the seat of judgment.'
>
> Thus, flesh does not think God worthy of so great glory, that it should believe him to be just and good, while he says and does those things which are above that, which the volume of Justin and the fifth book of Aristotle's Ethics, have defined to be justice. That Majesty which is the creating cause of all things, must bow to one of the dregs of his creation: and that Corycian cavern must, vice versa, fear its spectators. . . .He must be brought to order. He must have certain laws prescribed to him, that he damn not any one but him, who, according to our judgment, deserves to be damned.[1]

In the controversy with Erasmus which produced these statements the great humanist was concerned to maintain the morality of God, while Luther seemed quite ready to sacrifice it to save God's unbounded freedom of action and sovereignty.[2]

The Sovereign Freedom of God

Anything less than an ascription of absolute freedom to God seemed to Luther unfitting in view of the difference in status between God and man:

> Where remains the power of the potter to make what vessel he will, if, being subject to merit and laws, he is not permitted to make what he will, but is required to make what he ought? The respect of merit militates against the power and liberty of making what he will: as is proved by that "good man of the house," who, when the workmen murmured and expostulated concerning their right, objected in answer, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, pp. 250 f.

[2] Cf. Bainton, p. 254.

with mine own?"[1]

At the same time, we must note that God has a *right* to exercise free and absolute power over mankind because of His position as creator. "A cause and reason are assigned for the will of the creature, but not for the will of the Creator; unless you set up, over him, another Creator."[2] Bergendorf believes this means, not that whatever God does (i.e., whatever *is*) is right, but rather that establishing criteria of what is right for the divine action is not a function of the creature.[3] How the two ideas can be detached is, perhaps, not quite clear.

All this seems to suggest that divine "property rights" take precedence over God's *social* or *personal* obligations--i.e., the "right" of each man to equal treatment by God. It does not deny the applicability of some norm of right, however. Essentially the same thing is said, likewise, where Luther urges that since God is in no wise indebted to us, He has a perfect *right* to treat us as He pleases. Men are exhorted to

> be silent, and to revere the majesty of the divine power and will, over which we have no control, but which has over us a full control to do whatever it will. And yet it does us no injury, seeing that it is not indebted to us, it never received any thing from us, it never promised us any thing but what itself pleased and willed."[4]

---

[1] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 251.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

[3] C. J. Bergendorf, "The Sphere of Revelation," *Official Register of Harvard University*, XLVI (April 25, 1949), 23 f.

[4] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 225.

Scattered throughout the Bondage of the Will there are other such assertions, all suggesting that God does "of his mere will, leave men, harden them, and damn them."[1] Luther goes beyond even his Nominalist teachers in asserting the arbitrary freedom of God, by denying the distinction they had set up between His "absolute" and His "ordaining" power. God, as God, can do anything He wills to do, they said, but when He has created a world and ordained man's redemption in it, He has Himself limited His own further decisions. There is thus no final approval of the idea of a capricious or chaotic God.[2] Luther, however, impatiently brushes aside such attempts to "excuse the goodness of God":

> Distinctions have been invented between the ordinary will of God and the absolute will of God: between the necessity of the consequence, and the necessity of the thing consequent: and many other inventions of the same kind. By which, nothing has ever been effected, but an imposition upon the unlearned.[3]

God's will is sheerly and simply free and absolute and that is the end of the matter. So at least in some moods. Yet on the whole such fulsome exaltation of the sheer divine will is not entirely congenial to Luther. More characteristic, for example, is the simple assertion that God's will is a sufficient reason for us to do, or to refrain from, any specific thing. Thus, in regard to observance of the sacrament of the mass:

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 227.

[2] Calhoun, p. 336.

[3] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 227.

> Since God has so ordered this sacrament, we must not despise it, but receive it with great reverence, praise and gratitude. For if there were no other reason why we should observe mass outwardly and not be satisfied with inward faith alone, yet were this sufficient, that God so orders and wills it. And His will ought to please us above all things and be sufficient reason to do or omit anything.[1]

In a similar vein, Luther comments on the question, Why God reveals himself only through the Word:

> I answer: Thus it pleaseth God. . . .He could do without the word, but such is not his *will*. And who are we that we should inquire into the cause of the divine will? It is enough for us to know, that such is the will of God; and it becomes us, bridling the temerity of reason, to reverence, love, and adore that will. For Christ, Matt. xi, gives no other reason why the Gospel is hidden from the wise, and revealed unto babes, than this:--So it pleased the Father![2]

But though we may not inquire into the cause of the divine will, it is not consistently affirmed that there *is* no cause, as appears from the following statement in the same work:

> The reason of the divine will is not to be inquired into, but simply to be adored, and the glory to be given unto God: who, since he alone is just and wise, doth evil to no one, and can do nothing rash or inconsiderately, although it may appear far otherwise to us. With this answer those that fear God are content.[3]

At this point our tentative conclusion must be, that Luther unreservedly affirms God's freedom of action and decision; yet always bears in the back of his mind, at least, the notion that God's free will and act are not sheerly arbitrary but right and good--even if in ways beyond our understanding.

---

[1] Luther, *Works*, I, 319.

[2] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 179.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Here the problem is tied up with the mystery of deity, with which we dealt in a preliminary way in connection with the hidden God but to which we must now turn again to ask if there be any intelligible cause or reason for the admittedly mysterious operation of the divine will.

God and Reason

Luther's reputation as an arch irrationalist is not entirely undeserved. There is a multitude of passages in his writings to document not only a radical depreciation of human reason, but even a downright abuse of it which amounts at times to obscenity:

> Reason is the devil's greatest whore; by nature and manner of being she is a noxious whore; she is a prostitute, the devil's appointed whore; whore eaten by scab and leprosy who ought to be trodden under foot and destroyed, she and her wisdom. . .throw dung in her face to make her ugly. She is, and she ought to be, drowned in baptism. . . .She would deserve, the wretch, to be banished to the filthiest place in the house, to the closets.[1]

The implication would seem to be clear. Not only is God not to be defined in terms of a reason which is essentially analogous to that of men, as Aquinas had done, but it is utterly impossible to expect Him to act by any rational norms which human reason could possibly comprehend. And yet the story is not so simple.

For one thing, Luther is quite willing--in less testy

---

[1] A mass of evidence of this extreme kind is cited in Maritain, pp. 32 ff. This passage is from the Erlangen Ed., 16, 142-148; it is dated 1546, his last sermon at Wittenberg. Other citations are of EA 44, 156 f., and WA VI, 143, 25-6, 32-5 (Tischreden, No. 6718).

moments--to allow reason a positive and significant role in many concerns of life. A prince ought to rule by reason, even if good laws must then at times be overruled.[1] "There is no better government on earth than under the Turks," who have only natural reason and conscience.[2]

Luther prided himself on his own accomplishments in the use of reason and on his learning.[3] He could deal very analytically with a problem in church history,[4] and was "unable to admire sufficiently the human understanding for having observed with so great accuracy the orbits of the planets."[5] His biblical translations and commentaries are remarkable examples of philological skill and of insistence upon sound clear thought.[6] He laid great emphasis upon the importance of general liberal education.[7]

Even in matters of theology Luther by no means denied

---

[1] Luther, *Works*, III, 263.

[2] Bainton, p. 239; citing WA VI, 459.

[3] Luther, *Works*, V, 13; Bainton, p. 367, citing Hans Preuss, *Martin Luther der Prophet* (1933), pp. 36 f.; *ibid.*, p. 119, citing WA II, 404; Fife, p. 10.

[4] Luther, *Works*, V, 142.

[5] Smith and Gallinger, p. 103.

[6] Bainton, pp. 326 ff.; Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 169.

[7] Luther, *Works*, IV, 111, from the appeal "To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany that They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools"; cf. his "Sermon on Keeping Children in School," *ibid.*, IV, 133 ff. Wayne Rood, "Dark Amid the Blaze of Noon: Education and the Reformation" (Unpublished Th.D. thesis, Pacific School of Religion, 1949), has much valuable material on this subject.

completely the competence or value of reason. Reason itself, he maintained, could discover that God must exercise an absolute and total control over all things,[1] and he even cited a pagan author to clinch his point![2] He allowed a place therefore for "natural theology," which can tell us _that_ God is and even certain significant things about Him such as His eternity, creatorship, and sovereignty.[3] Wherein, then, does the _logos_ of man so fail to correspond to the _logos_ of God as to justify Luther's strictures against reason?

One answer is that reason gives a certain knowledge of God, which is valid as far as it goes, and thus does correspond more or less accurately to His reality, but which is only _external_ and very partial. "God's actual divine essence and his will, administration and works--are absolutely beyond all human thought, human understanding or wisdom." Thus we cannot know by reason that God is a Trinity, nor can we _understand_ this, even when we have been told it, any more than we can understand how the bread of the sacrament is the body of Christ, or that Christ is both man and God.[4] These are, so to speak, _scientific_ or purely intellectual inadequacies of grasp. But there is nothing here which the Scholastics had not, at least in principle, always granted. With his intense piety Luther probably resented their prying into di-

---

[1] Luther, _Bondage of the Will_, p. 226.

[2] _Ibid._, pp. 30 f.

[3] Kerr, pp. 37 f.; cf. Smith and Gallinger, pp. 119 f., 183.

[4] Kerr, pp. 38 f.; cf. pp. 3, 80.

vine mysteries, yet this cannot explain all his vehemence against their use of reason. And yet more important, this is no proof that the *unknown* aspect of God is not consistent with, similar to, those aspects which reason can perceive and grasp; is not, in a word, pervaded by the same *logos* which is in the human mind.

We see the heart of the problem, rather, in the fact that while reason can discern many of the *metaphysical* attributes of God--including those aspects of creatorship, sovereignty, eternity, etc., which as we have seen tend to make God transcendent of moral norms--it is impotent to discover or comprehend His *moral* attributes, "his will toward men concerning their salvation."[1] Something beside reason is needed for this, namely, faith. What, then, is faith?

Luther sees man, at least the Christian, as having three levels of being for which the Mosaic tabernacle serves as a figure:

> His *spirit* is the holy of holies, where God dwells in the darkness of faith, where no light is; for he believes that which he neither sees nor feels nor comprehends. His *soul* is the holy place, with its seven lamps, that is all manner of reason, discrimination, knowledge and understanding of visible and bodily things. His *body* is the forecourt, open to all.[2]

Here the soul is clearly the seat of "reason," as ordinarily understood. It has its own competence and honorable function. But beyond this reason is another faculty, that of "faith" which is the prerogative of the spirit and

---

[1] Kerr, p. 38, quoting *Lenker Ed.* IX, #2-18.

[2] Luther, *Works*, III, 133 (italics ours).

which lays "hold on things incomprehensible, invisible, and eternal."[1] Faith then does not simply give more of the same kind of "discrimination, knowledge and understanding" that reason affords. Rather, it seems to deal with the quality and meaning of things, giving what might be called insight:

> Oh, what fine, fair, happy thoughts would man have had were he not fallen! How he would have meditated upon God in all creatures, that he should see in the smallest and meanest flower God's omnipotent wisdom and goodness![2]

The same problem exists in understanding the Scriptures. Though the "external sense" is clear, there is also an "internal clearness," and "understanding of the heart." (Luther says that through the latter one grasps not only that God is three in one and that Christ is man and God, but how this is so. This interpretation cannot be his real thought, for it is impossible to suppose he believed that even faith could grasp the supernatural mechanism of the incarnation or the Trinity. This is exactly what he berated the Scholastics for attempting. By the how he must mean the moral rather than the metaphysical truth involved in these doctrines.) In this sense no one understands "one iota in the Scriptures but he that hath the Spirit of God."[3] That is, a miracle quite beyond the purview of reason is required. To try to grasp these mysteries of faith in their inward saving meaning by the mind alone is like "trying to measure the wind with a

---

[1] Luther, Works, III, 132.

[2] Bainton, 221, quoting Tischreden, 4201.

[3] Luther, Bondage of the Will, 16 f.

bushel, or to weigh fire with scales."[1]

Here we see why the work of man's "spirit" is that of grasping "things incomprehensible, invisible, and eternal" in "the darkness of faith."[2] Reason simply cannot see, recognize, or admit the things of faith which are literally "invisible" to it. Such, for example, is the existence of "one holy Christian church." Reason "cannot recognize it, though it puts all its glasses on" because the Church is so covered with offenses and tumults, faults and shortcomings, both by God and the devil, that it is not holy by any reasonable standard. Rather, its holiness "is in heaven, and not in the world, before men's eyes, like goods in the market." And yet we are not to doubt it![3] We must likewise see God's secret power in all the vicissitudes of life, though its reality be completely hidden from us.[4] We must believe against the moral reason of all mankind, being called to

> believe that he is merciful, who saves so few and damns so many; to believe him just, who according to his own will, makes us necessarily damnable, that he may seem, as Erasmus says, 'to delight in the torments of the miserable, and to be an object of hatred rather than of love.'[5]

We must believe against the powerful deliverances of our own conscience:

---

[1] Smith and Gallinger, p. 216.

[2] Luther, Works, III, 132 f.

[3] Ibid., VI, 487 f.

[4] Ibid., III, 178.

[5] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 158.

> This is the highest stage of faith, when God punishes the conscience not only with temporal sufferings, but with death, hell, and sin, and refuses grace and mercy, as though it were His will to condemn and to be angry eternally.[1]

Here is the heart of the matter. Faith clings with confidence and trust to what reason, logic, conscience, experience say cannot be so. Reason believes about God

> as I do when I believe what is said about the Turk, the devil or hell. This faith is knowledge or observation rather than faith. The other way is to believe in God, as I do when I not only believe that what is said about Him is true, but put my trust in Him, surrender myself to Him and make bold to deal with Him, believing without doubt that He will be to me and do to me just what is said of Him.[2]

The test of such faith is to believe that one is well-pleasing to God when one suffers in body, property, honor, friends, or whatever he has, and to trust in Him "when to all our senses and reason He appears to be angry; and to have greater confidence in Him than we feel."[3] Faith is credulous enough to believe in the divine mercy when that mercy is clearly incredible:

> When I am told that God became man, I can follow the idea, but I just do not understand what it means. For what man, if left to his natural promptings, if he were God, would humble himself to lie in the feedbox of a donkey or to hang upon a Cross.. . . This is that ineffable and infinite mercy of God which the slender capacity of man's heart cannot comprehend and much less utter.[4]

Striking evidence that we are on the right track in

---

[1] Luther, Works, I, 193.

[2] Ibid., II, 368.

[3] Ibid., I, 192.

[4] Bainton,p.223, quoting Tischreden, 5015.

setting over against reason not so much a metaphysical mystery which contradicts our reason as a moral mystery which transcends the ordinary quality of our experience is found in Luther's doctrine of the imago dei. He puts it quite specifically:

> I, for my part, understand the image of God to be this;--that Adam. . .not only knew God, and believed Him to be good, but that he lived also a life truly divine; that is, free from the fear of death and of all dangers, and happy in the favour of God.
>
> . . . .
>
> Now the divine object of the Gospel is that we might be restored to that original, and indeed to a better and higher, image; an image, in which we are born again unto eternal life, or rather, unto the hope of eternal life, by faith.[1]

Behind such thinking seems to lie Luther's notion that reason is able to achieve only a sort of gross mechanical understanding of God's moral activity. It must assume the validity, even for Him, of such common sense postulates as these: "Self-interest is supreme" (and therefore God couldn't possibly of His own free love lie in a donkey's feedbox and hang on a cross); "I have done wrong, therefore I am damned"[2] (there can be no simple forgiveness, out of sheer love); and "I have done well, God must reward me" (the accounts of life can be balanced up by penitential bookkeeping, good works, indulgences, and the rest, which will bring their infallible reward).

Luther was quite right in seeing the incompatibility of the gospel with such premises. In his own religious ex-

---

[1] Kerr, pp. 82 f., quoting Commentary on Genesis, 87-93.

[2] Smith and Gallinger, pp. 230 f.

perience, in the "ordeal by History" of the Roman church,[1] in mankind's common experience of life's vicissitudes they are tried and found wanting. If reason insists upon them, then God must be utterly beyond and against reason--or there is no gospel. The question is, do these "commonsense" premises in fact represent the necessary postulates of reason, i.e., of orderly and consistent thought, coherent with human experience in the broadest sense? Must forgiveness violate moral reason? Is it rationally necessary to believe in a strict system of legalistic works-righteousness with stated (and purchasable) rewards or punishments? Simply to raise such questions is to answer them, and in the negative.

Hence, faith is not necessarily opposed to reason. Rather, it represents another dimension of the human spirit altogether, an existential rather than intellectual act of trust and appreciation which grasps vitally that reality of God which reason too may grasp in its own way, even if but partially. And what faith grasps--this is the crux of our whole concern here--is the _goodness of God above all calculation and against all appearances_. The ultimate "irrationality" to which faith points is the fact that God is sheer love, _agape_, self-giving and gracious.[2] The kind of reason which it contradicts is that logic which becomes so preoccupied with the sheer physical power, impersonality, regularity, and mechanism manifested in the realm of nature--and with the meta-

---

[1] Rupp, p. 49, uses this striking phrase.

[2] Cf. our discussion of divine goodness, _infra_, pp. 93ff.

physical vertigo generated by notions of infinity, eternity, creation, and the like--that it can find no place for God's personal and moral attributes. The supreme irony of Luther's thought is that it was precisely this wrong kind of reason upon which he relied with naive completeness in working out, say, his doctrine of Providence! Failing to take his own warnings sufficiently seriously, he idolized reason precisely where it could do the most harm; then sought to exorcise the demon of a grim amoral Absolute by rhetorical violence against the instrument he had himself used perversely.

But if reason is not used in this rigid mechanical way, and if moral norms are not conceived in a narrow legalistic and pseudo-rationalistic sense, but rather according to the deepest insights of the Christian tradition--and indeed of most religions[1]--then our examination of "God and Reason" vindicates and underscores His essential relation to moral norms.

God and Law

Medieval Background, and Luther's Reaction

It is very fitting to follow up the discussion of God and reason with that of God and law, for the two are closely connected. Aquinas had defined a law as an ordinance of reason for the common good, or "a dictate of practical reason."[2]

---

[1] Even Emil Brunner agrees that the "law of love" is found generally in the moral teachings of mankind; cf. Our Faith, trans. J. W. Rilling (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 47; Reason and Revelation, trans. Olive Wyon (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 323, 325.

[2] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II, I. 90. 4; 91. 1.

And the Roman system against which Luther reacted expressed its rational character in a highly legalistic structure. The whole universe is governed by the divine reason, which in its concrete activity of guidance takes on the quality of law; and this expression of divine reason is called the "eternal law."[1] The way in which the eternal law, expressive of the divine reason, participates in rational creatures who in their own turn share in the light of the divine reason, is through the "natural law" which governs, or ought to govern, all the activities of men.[2] "Human law" represents the deductive application of the principles of natural law to particular problems and situations;[3] and "divine law," i.e., that of revelation, serves to direct man to his supernatural end, to correct the uncertainty of human judgment and to regulate inner attitudes.[4] Thus law reigns, in some sense, in the moral action of both God and man. And it is very fitting that the life of man, including his religious activities and attitudes, should be ordered in detail by this congeries of natural, human, and revealed ecclesiastical and Scriptural laws which faithfully reflect the divine reason.

Against such legalism Luther reacted as violently as he did against Scholastic rationalism. At the point where his break with Rome became explicit and final he burned at

---

[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II, I. 91. 1.

[2] Ibid., II, I. 91. 2.

[3] Ibid., II, I. 91. 3.

[4] Ibid., II, I. 91. 4.

the Elster gate of Wittenberg not only the papal bull against him, and the books of scholastic theology, but also the canon law.[1] His writings inveigh against the law as a "tyrant" and one of the enemies of man.[2] Yet as we discovered in the case of reason, the situation is not quite so simple as Luther's invective suggests. What does it all mean? and what was his total attitude?

Luther on Natural Law

First of all, he ascribed to the natural law a good deal of validity and importance. To be sure, he did not agree with his master Biel that even if, as is impossible, God were not or the divine reason should err, the natural law would still be obligating.[3] But the "'law of nature has been naturally and indelibly stamped upon the mind' of man,"[4] and the Decalog is so completely a compend of the natural law that if it had never been given still the mind of man would have had its chief points naturally.[5] The same is true of the Golden

---

[1] Bainton, pp. 165 f.

[2] Gustaf Aulén, Christus Victor, An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement, trans. A. G. Hebert (American edition; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 112.

[3] John T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Thought of Luther," Church History, X, (September, 1941), 215.

[4] John T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," Journal of Religion, XXVI, (July, 1946), 168, quoting Lectures on Romans, 2:15.

[5] Ibid., quoting WA XXXIX, Part I, 374.

Rule.[1] To be sure, this is most emphasized where Luther is dealing with politics and human affairs.[2] When it is a question of salvation, and the sinfulness of man, he is inclined to depreciate the significance of natural law.[3]

The central question for us is whether this natural law is in any sense prescriptive for God, or at least validly descriptive of Him, as it certainly seems to have been for Aquinas. McNeill agrees with Catlin[4] that for Aquinas natural law is simply the will of a very personal God,[5] and thinks this a good statement of Luther's position too. But on the basis of the evidence presented above, this is difficult to accept so far as Aquinas is concerned. For him natural law faithfully reflects the eternal law which is simply the divine reason, not the free divine will, in its guiding and governing function.[6] Is this true for Luther? I doubt if a definitive answer can be given on the basis of direct evidence. But certainly it would be very hazardous to suggest anything but a negative answer in view of the total

---

[1] McNeill, Church History, X, 223, n. 41.

[2] McNeill, Journal of Religion, XXVI, 169 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 169, citing WA XL, Part II, 66 f.

[4] George Catlin, The Story of the Political Philosophers (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939), p.172.

[5] McNeill, Church History, X, 224.

[6] I have found support for this in one passage, however; cf. Aquinas, Selected Political Writings, trans. J. G. Dawson (ed. with introduction by A. P. D'Entreves; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948), p. 67. Here, as at so many points, Aquinas' great system represents a companionate marriage of doubtfully compatible ideas.

structure of Luther's thought about God, its intense concern for His sovereignty and freedom, His mysterious and unpredictable depth, and the like.[1]

Theological Significance of Law

Luther is quite willing to grant the law of the Old Testament continuing validity insofar as its content was moral. Only the ceremonial law of the Jews was abrogated; but the moral law of Moses expressed, as we have seen, the natural law which is timeless.[2] The two Testaments perform complementary functions: the Old showing in the law what man is to do and not to do, the New teaching where one is to get the power to fulfill that law.[3] There is no conflict between law and the gospel ethic because "all laws aim at faith and love" and are naturally subordinate to them.[4]

And yet there is a fatal defect in law, as experience and Scripture both teach: "the less law, the more justice; the fewer commandments, the more good works."[5] Why? Because, as we have seen, the law aims at nothing less than an inward excellence, at free and spontaneous faith and love. Thus

> where there is unwillingness, there can never be a good

---

[1] For the significance of Luther's view of the atonement and its rejection of the ultimacy of legal categories, see the discussion of Justification, *infra*, pp. 69 ff.

[2] Bainton, p. 334.

[3] Luther, *Works*, VI, 368.

[4] *Ibid*., p. 372.

[5] *Ibid*., I, 294.

> work. For what is not done willingly is not good, and only seems to be good. Consequently, all the laws cannot make one really pious without the grace of God, for they can produce only dissemblers, hypocrites, pretenders, and proud saints.[1]

Here we begin to see why the law, perfectly right and good in itself, brings sin. For without the power to do as it commands, we stick in sin, and "death presses upon us as veangeance [*sic*], and punishment for sin. Therefore Paul calls sin 'the sting of death'."

> Nevertheless, this office of sin and death is good and very necessary; for where God's law is not, there human reason is so blind that it cannot recognize sin. . . .It knows nothing about man's duty to believe God and trust Him; thus it goes on, hardened in its blindness, and feels this sin not at all, doing meanwhile some works that would otherwise be good and leading an outwardly honorable life. . . .The reason does not know that the wicked inclination of the flesh and hatred against enemies are sin, but because it feels that all men are so inclined, it holds that these things are natural and right and thinks it enough to guard against outward wrong-doing. Thus it goes on and regards its illness as strength, its sin as right, its bad as good, and can make no progress.[2]

It is to remedy this situation that the law is given, teaching men what they ought to do, and showing them at the same time that they cannot. By this means the law sets sin before our eyes,"driving all our presumption into despondency and trembling and despair."[3] When the conscience then feels its inability to do good, it is forced by the law "to seek something beyond the law and its own ability, namely, God's grace, promised in Christ." Then it is that we are ready to

---

[1] Luther, Works, I, 294.

[2] *Ibid.*, VI, 373 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 374 f.

receive salvation from God; and thus the law serves as God's instrument to bring us grace. Even the apparent superfluity of Levitical laws, which prohibit and make sins of things which are not in their own nature sinful or wicked, thus serve the wholesome purpose of preparing us to receive God's gift.[1]

One other point helps make it clear that for Luther law is no ultimate enemy. For the work of Christ is precisely to give us that power by which the law is fulfilled:

> The law makes us sinners, and sin makes us guilty of death. Who hath conquered these twain? . . .It was Jesus Christ, rising from the dead, condemning sin and death, bestowing on us His merits, and holding His hand over us. And now it is well with us, we keep the law, and vanquish sin and death.[2]

Salvation through Christ thus means the validation and fulfillment of the law, as well as the overcoming of the guilt with which it charges us.

Our conclusion is that while Luther at times conducts a polemic against the law--i.e., against the notion of a rationally ordered system of norms and commands to which we are subject--yet his attitude is by no means entirely negative. Without linking it directly with the divine reason as Aquinas had done, he yet accords natural law an important place. The law of Scripture is negative in its function to begin with. It is God's "strange work," but it ends as an instrument of God's "proper work," that of salvation through grace. And it is then fulfilled in the works which faith produces. We may

---

[1] Luther, Works, VI, 374 f.

[2] Ibid., I, 169.

conclude that Luther's God cannot be "antinomian," i.e., capricious, unpredictable, disorderly; though his activity must fundamentally be understood in personal rather than legal categories.[1]

Justification, and the Justice of God

Justification by faith is the center and pivot of Luther's theology, and it raises highly significant questions for our particular inquiry. Where forgiveness and eternal life are given freely, without regard to merit and the nice balancing of reward and punishment, one inevitably asks: is God *just*? Does His mercy express some moral *order* of purpose and activity, or is it simply capricious, arbitrary?

The Justice of God

Luther unhesitatingly affirms that God is just.[2] He is faithful to His promise and covenant, come what may.[3] Yet there are three ways in which this affirmation is shadowed. For one thing, the standard of God's judgment is strange. To Him, "the very best good work is a venial sin"; according to His strict judgment a mortal one.[4] Even the most perfect examples of human virtue according to His justice are not only not meritorious, but actually "most impious, and the greatest of

---

[1] Cf. Bring's discussion of the meaning of law as summarized in Carlson, pp. 55 f., 70 f.

[2] Luther, *Works*, III, 101; I, 127, 147.

[3] *Ibid*., I, 63.

[4] *Ibid*., III, 102.

sacrilege."[1] Conversely, a man may be a murderer and adulterer and still be "most saintly" in God's sight.[2] How does Luther explain such "justice"?

Sometimes he does not explain it. God has simply said that such *is* the case. "In Thy sight shall no man living be justified," and not to be justified is to be condemned and damned.[3] His judgment cannot be false, so if He finds our righteousness to be unrighteous, the damnable sin must really be in it whether we can see it or not.[4] Note, however, that it is *not* affirmed that "unjust" simply means "unjust according to God's arbitrary determination." It is *really* unjust--by some unspecified standard.

It is this incomprehensibility, rather than arbitrariness, which is further underscored in Luther's second qualification. If God's

> righteousness were such, that it was considered to be righteousness according to human judgment, it would be no longer divine. . . .What perverseness must it be in us to attack the righteousness and judgments of God only, and to arrogate so much to our own judgment, as to wish to comprehend, judge, and rate, the divine judgments![5]

We must not *expect* to understand it fully *now*; but this is not because it is intrinsically unintelligible or capricious, but simply because until the end of time, when our minds are fully enlightened, we cannot *see* it. But "when he shall reveal His

---

[1] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 278.

[2] Luther, *Works*, II, 266.

[3] *Ibid.*, III, 102.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[5] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, pp. 370 f.

glory, we shall all see, and palpably feel, that he ever was, and is,--just!"[1]

> *How* is it just, that he should crown the undeserving, is incomprehensible now, but we shall see when we come there, where it will be no longer believed, but seen in revelation face to face. So also, *how* it is just, that he should damn the undeserving, is incomprehensible now, yet, we believe it, until the Son of Man shall be revealed![2]

But there is a third fact about this divine justice which was still more important in the development of Luther's own thought. For strict justice means condemnation of the wicked, and at the beginning it meant *only* that to Luther. It is inflexible and implacable:

> How many thousands are there in hell and everlasting damnation, who have not committed the thousandth part of our sins. . . .These seemed all their life long to be serving God, and, it may be for a single lapse, are now being punished forever.[3]

It was just at this point that Luther's own religious crisis took place.

> I hated this word "Justice of God," which by the use and custom of all doctors I had been taught to understand philosophically as they say, as that formal and active justice whereby God is just and punishes unjust sinners.
>
> For, however irreproachable my life as a monk, I felt myself, in the presence of God, to be a sinner with a most unquiet conscience, nor would I believe him to be pleased with my satisfaction. I did not love, indeed I hated this just God who punished sinners, and if not with silent blasphemy, at least with huge murmuring I was indignant against God, as if it were really not enough that miserable sinners, eternally ruined by original sin, should be crushed with every kind of calamity by

---

[1] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 372.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 253.

[3] Luther, *Works*, I, 127. Cf. p. 167 where God's justice is seen displayed in hell.

> the law of the Ten Commandments, but God through the Gospel must add sorrow on sorrow, and through the Gospel bring his wrath and justice to bear on us.[1]

The heart of Luther's great discovery was that the fundamental meaning of the "justice of God" was not retributive apportionment of penalties for sin and of rewards for goodness. Rather, in his own words,

> I began to understand that Justice of God in which the just man lives by the gift of God, i.e. by faith, and this sentence, "the Justice of God is revealed in the Gospel" to be understood passively as that whereby the merciful God justifies us by faith. . . .At this I felt myself to be born anew, and to enter through open gates into paradise itself.[2]

With this radical transformation of the idea of divine justice, Luther seems completely to discard the familiar notion of action according to fixed norms, by which fitting retribution is awarded according to desert. (We say "seems to discard" it because, as we shall see, the picture is not entirely clear.) Likewise discarded is the familiar notion of an impulse of "mercy" in God struggling with inflexible canons of retributive "justice." Rather, as the Swedish theologians in particular have emphasized, the tension is referred back to God Himself, where love and "wrath" struggle for victory. "Wrath" becomes the highly personal expression of God's negative relation to men of which condemnation according to formal "justice" would be the abstract, rational expression.[3]

---

[1] Rupp, p. 33, quoting WA 54. 179-187; cf. p. 34 and quotations there.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Aulén, Christus Victor, pp. 113 f. Cf. our discus-

Atonement

Thus Luther's idea of atonement shifts from the Latin concept of satisfaction made to the justice of God (or to his "honor," according to just standards), to the "classic" concept of the victory of God's love over all powers hostile to man, including His own wrath. For this reason Luther could say that God's work in Christ of atonement, forgiveness, justification, bears the signature "contra rationem et legem."[1]

Yet it must also be noted that Luther speaks at times of satisfaction made for sin, quite in the tradition of medieval transaction theories of atonement, and to that extent gives standing to the idea of a norm of justice with which even God's work must reckon.[2] In this same setting belongs the statement that penalty and satisfaction for sin are valid ideas, and that these "cannot be remitted"; "no sin ever goes unpunished."[3] Likewise, Luther insisted that people must be taught that worldly as well as heavenly welfare will result from keeping the divine commandments.[4]

From this brief survey we might well conclude that there was an unresolved tension in Luther's idea of the jus-

---

sion of the love and wrath of God, infra, pp. 93 f., where His "wrath" is seen as but one aspect of His love.

[1] Aulén, Christus Victor, p. 121; no citation in Luther's works for this phrase.

[2] Cf. Kerr, pp. 52 f., 54.

[3] Luther, Works, III, 42.

[4] Pascal, pp. 156 f.

tice of God. He retained some elements of the traditional view which actually set God's love over against the demands of a justice which seemed to constitute a norm by which His love must order itself. Yet his characteristic emphasis was upon a view which placed the dualism within God Himself, where a very personal love and wrath struggled for victory and where the only norm was really God's own goodness. Do we find the same tension in Luther's doctrine of justification?

Justification and Forgiveness

On the one hand, Luther seems to say that justification is essentially an "unreasonable" and even capricious act of God.[1] He plainly urges that the salvation of the undeserving is just as "monstrous and iniquitous in the sight of men" as is God's reprobation of the damned.[2] Faith, at times, is said to consist in a stubborn confidence that God is so kind"as to wink at. . .daily transgression and weakness."[3] Forgiveness is a bit sub rosa, so to speak. And, it involves a sheer arbitrary denial of what seem to be the facts.

> This is wonderful, not to see what I see, not to feel what I feel. Before my eyes I see a gulden, or a sword, or a fire, and I must say, "There is no gulden, no sword, no fire." The forgiveness of sins is like this.[4]

On the other hand, much in Luther seems to suggest

---

[1] Maritain, pp.36f., has a bloodcurdling farrago of apposite quotations which, being out of context, may or may not bear all the weight he rests upon them.

[2] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 253.

[3] Luther, Works, I, 202.

[4] Bainton, p.228, quoting Georg D. Buchwald, Predigten

that justification is orderly, "just," even rational. Faith, for example, is often called a "good work," and the "highest" of them all.[1] "By believing, do we glorify God and acknowledge that He is truthful. Therefore, faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian man, and the fulfilling of all the commandments."[2] The trust which God desires is set in contrast with other works.[3] And sin after baptism is not imputed only if, in addition to having faith in Christ, "we strive unceasingly against sin, to destroy it."[4]

In a very significant passage in his Preface to Romans Luther carefully explains that faith justifies by bringing us the Spirit through the merits of Christ; which then makes the heart free and willing as the law requires.

> In chapter iii, after having entirely rejected the works of the law, . . .it sounds as though he [Paul] would abolish the law by faith; "Nay," he says, "we establish the law by faith," that is, we fulfill it through faith.[5]

This suggestion that justification is inseparable from sanctification, i.e., is in reality a "making righteous" and so a fulfilling of the demands of justice, is developed in a considerable number of passages. The unrighteous sinner may stand in the presence of God because his unrighteousness is lost "in the infinite abyss of the righteousness

---

D. Martin Luthers, (1925-26), II, 25.

[1] Luther, Works, I, 193.

[2] Ibid., II, 322.

[3] Ibid., I, 195.

[4] Ibid., III, 36.

[5] Ibid., VI, 450.

of God."[1] He who abides in the love of God is no longer "a mere man, but a god. . .for God Himself is in him and does such things as no man nor creature can do."[2] It is never doubted, of course, that the priority lies with God's free forgiving grace, extended while we are mere sinners. Yet the point remains, that justification is more than a matter of simply not imputing sins: it involves the actual "making righteous" which would, so to speak, help justify the verdict "not guilty" before the bar of a transcendent justice. Luther never explicitly talks this way, and might well deny that this is in his mind at all. Yet the tensions in his doctrine as presented, taken in conjunction with all the previous material cited, strongly suggest that God's "justice" is more than a merely honorific postulate empty of all humanly apprehensible meaning. It seems to represent a kind of orderly faithfulness to a norm of fair, right dealing somewhere in His own nature if not external to Him and over Him.

Predestination

Although the assertion of justification without prior regard to merit raises only minor questions about God's relation to moral norms, the apparent fact of discrimination in the bestowal of forgiving grace creates a very grave issue indeed. If the principle of sola gratia is rigorously held,

---

[1] Rupp, p. 41, citing WA 56. 204. 23.

[2] Nygren, Part II, Vol. II, 516, quoting WA 36, pp. 438, 20 ff. Cf. Luther, Works, II, 328; I, 168 f., 304.

if all human merit and cooperation in the achievement of salvation is excluded, no other conclusion is possible but that God Himself is responsible for the unequal response of men to His Word, and hence for their damnation as well as their salvation. And it is just such an emphasis upon the divine initiative which is characteristic of Luther's doctrine.[1] "God does not permit us to find him. . . .He must first come and seek us where we are. We may not pursue and overtake him. That is not his will."[2]

To be sure, there are a few exceptions to this rule. In one significant passage Luther assigns to human response a significant role, asserting only that God must take the first step:

> God alone, without any entreaty or desire of man, must first come and give him a promise. This word of God is the beginning, the foundation, the rock, upon which afterward all works, words and thoughts of man must build. This word man must gratefully accept, and faithfully believe the divine promise. . . .This trust and faith is the beginning, middle, and end of all works and righteousness. For, because man does God the honor of regarding and confessing Him as true, He becomes to him a gracious God.[3]

The overwhelming weight of Luther's writings, however, is against allowing the human will any share at all in the determination of events.[4] At most he is willing to

---

[1] As will be shown later in this section.

[2] Kerr, p. 33, quoting Lenker Ed., IX, No. 12.

[3] Luther, Works, I, 297.

[4] Luther, Bondage of the Will, passim. Cf. the section following, on Providence. It ought to be noted that this book is a stronger statement of predestination than Calvin ever made. He liked its views in general, but thought some of its expressions too strong; Schaff, I, 215, n. 2.

grant that possibly man has some freedom of choice

> in respect only of those things which are below him: . . . as to his goods and possessions, the right of using, acting, and omitting, according to his Free-will; although at the same time, that same Free-will is overruled by the Free-will of God alone, just as He pleases: but that, God-ward, or in things which pertain unto salvation or damnation, he has no Free-will, but is a captive, slave, and servant, either to the will of God, or to the will of Satan.[1]

In other words, whatever crack may be left in the structure of absolute Providence, predestination still stands fast. Otherwise, he feels, things relating to salvation would simply be at the disposal of "that idol Fortune":

> Nay, we shall at length come to this: that men may be saved and damned without God's knowing any thing at all about it; as not having determined by certain election who should be saved and who should be damned; but having set before all men in general his hardening goodness and long-suffering, and his mercy-shewing correction and punishment, and left them to choose for themselves whether they would be saved or damned; while he, in the mean time, should be gone, as Homer says, to an Ethiopian feast![2]

Sensible as such a view might seem to other theologians, it was clearly intolerable to Luther. Its mere statement seemed to him a sort of reductio ad adsurdum. The only remaining question is whether he consistently held to a double decree both to salvation and damnation. The passages cited, among a host of others, would seem to make clear that he did. Nevertheless it has been doubted.

Brunner argues strongly that although up to 1525 Luther did hold to a double decree, yet after that he gradu-

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 66. Cf. Preserved Smith, The Life and Letters of Martin Luther (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), p. 233.

[2] Bondage of the Will, p. 201.

ally gave up double predestination without ever being quite clear about the shift in his own thinking. He offers the following three arguments in evidence: a) after 1525 Luther says that God in Christ offers us as His sole will the gospel of grace--and whoever speculates upon God's will outside of Christ simply loses God;[1] b) the fact that some men do not accept Christ is due to their own sinful will and resistance;[2] c) and most decisive of all, this sinful will and unbelief is not to be ascribed to a secret decree of reprobation, counter to the proclaimed offer of universal grace.[3] Ultimately, it comes down to the assertion that the God revealed in Christ is the only true God; that

> if thou dost believe in the revealed God and dost receive His Word, then soon also the hidden God will reveal Himself unto thee. . . .If thou dost cling with firm faith to the revealed God. . .then art thou certainly predestined and thou knowest the hidden God.[4]

Against this view that Luther tacitly dropped double predestination is the fact that he not only never repudiated On the Bondage of the Will, but in a letter as late as 1537 he emphatically reaffirmed it as one of his very best writings.[5] In the Articles of Smalcald of the same year he again denied all freedom to the will, which logically necessitates double predestination to account for the difference in the

---

[1] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 343.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 344, quoting WA 43. 460.

[5] Schaff, Creeds, I, 303, n. 1.

actual condition of men (barring a theory of universalism, of which Luther never even dreamed). And in his Commentary on Genesis (Ch. 6:16, 18; Ch. 21), one of his latest works, he taught the same view of the secret will of God as he had in 1525.[1] Schaff grants, in spite of this, that Luther was "more cautious" in later years on predestination.[2]

And well he might have been, for he always disliked the doctrine. In the very year 1525 he wrote, "I myself have more than once been offended [by this doctrine] almost to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man." To be sure, he went on to say that this despair was "near to grace" and salutary.[3] But it was characteristic of him to counsel against too much thought about this teaching. The proper way is to follow the order of Romans: recognize your sin and Christ's grace, then fight your sin, and when you have thus come under the cross and suffering you are in a position to recognize the comfort of the doctrine of predestination. "For in the absence of suffering and the cross and the danger of death, one cannot deal with predestination without harm and without secret wrath against God."[4] That is, he virtually converts the meaning of predestination into the positive assurance that in spite of our

---

[1] Schaff, Creeds, I, 215 n. 2 . But cf. Brunner's denial of this, p. 343.

[2] Schaff, Creeds, I, 303.

[3] Rupp, p. 32, quoting WA 18. 719.7 ff.

[4] Luther, Works, VI, 460.

own weakness God's power will save us.[1] To deal with it in any other way is to forget all that Christ and God are and to be led to believe that God is a villain.[2]

Why, then, did Luther never explicitly repudiate the doctrine, in spite of his long-standing dislike of it and its implication that God is the author of evil? Two reasons seem most important. First, in his conflict with Rome he found himself pressed to maintain in its extremest form the view that man and all his works have absolutely no efficacy in regard to salvation.[3] Second, he was committed to a general view of absolute Providence which made predestination an inevitable corollary. To that topic we now turn.

Providence, or the Divine Causality

Luther's doctrine of an absolute Providence is crystal clear in the treatise On the Bondage of the Will. Since he never repudiated this work, as we have seen, and indeed valued it highly,[4] we may take it as definitive of his position. He stated God's omnipotence as "not that power by which he *does not* many things he *could do*, but that *actual power* by

---

[1] Luther, *Works*, VI, 459; Kerr, p. 36.

[2] Smith and Gallinger, p. 136.

[3] Cf. Schaff, *Creeds*, I, 303, where the *anthropological* premise is shown to be central for Luther; Luther, *Works*, III, 108 f.

[4] In the letter to Capito, 1537, he writes, "I do not recognize any of my writings as genuine except those on the Enslaved Will and the Catechism"; quoted in Hartmann Grisar, *Martin Luther, His Life and Work*, ed. A. Preuss (adapted from the 2d German ed. by F. J. Eble; St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1930), p. 303.

which he powerfully works all in all."[1] God's is an "energetic power, a continuous activity, that works and operates without ceasing."[2] Indeed, He would be "ridiculous, if he could not do and did not all things, or if any thing could be done without him."[3] He is even willing to assimilate his doctrine to the Fate of heathen poets.[4]

To be sure, God's action often uses creatures as a kind of secondary cause.[5] But even here the creature is only a passive instrument, a tool, hardly a real secondary cause.[6] On the other hand, sometimes His working is direct and secret, "with His own arm," when things are destroyed or raised up and no one sees it done.[7] But in both cases, it is simply God's power doing all.

This means that not even in the human will is there any center of independence or freedom over against God's causality. Our will is only a dumb beast, as it were, which is ridden either by God or Satan, and has no choice at all which rider it shall have.[8] As usually understood, "free-will is a mere lie; and . . . like the woman in the gospel, the more it

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, pp. 226 f.

[2] Luther, Works, III, 163 f.

[3] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p.226. [4] Ibid., pp. 30 f.

[5] Luther, Works, III, 178.

[6] Rupp, p.49, quotes Gilson's apt comment that the Reformers failed to appreciate the importance of secondary causes.

[7] Luther, Works, III, 178.

[8] Luther, Bondage of the Will, pp. 61 f.

is taken in hand by physicians, the worse it is made."[1] To this generalization Luther is willing to allow only two footnotes: a) there is "that, by which a man is fitted to be caught by the Spirit, or to be touched by the grace of God, as one created unto eternal life or eternal death"; and this capacity may be called "free-will," if one so chooses;[2] b) Luther grants that the necessity under which the will operates is not compulsion. "A man void of the Spirit of God, does not evil against his will as by violence, or as if he were taken by the neck and forced to it." He does it sponteneously, desiring and willing to do so. But "this willingness and desire of doing evil he cannot, by his own power, leave off, restrain, or change," and this is his bondage.[3]

On the other hand, a person changed by the Spirit "desires and acts, not from compulsion, but responsively, from pure willingness, inclination and accord." Nothing can turn it aside; its desire and love for the good is equally irresistible.[4] This kind of statement gives color to the thesis of Calhoun, that for Luther the irresistible causality of God is really an "irresistible personal attraction." He directs the will of man by evoking love and directing it toward Himself, and thus He moves man as a person and does not violate

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 5.

[2] Ibid., p. 63. Though he thinks this usage abominable. Works, III, 110.

[3] Bondage of the Will, pp. 59 f.

[4] Ibid., p. 60.

his personal status.[1] Indeed, Luther himself uses almost this identical language:

> No one can praise God without first loving Him. No one can love Him unless He makes Himself known to him in the most lovable and intimate fashion. . . .But where there is this experience, namely, that He is a God who looks into the depths and helps only the poor, despised, afflicted, miserable, forsaken, and those who are naught, there a hearty love for Him is born, the heart o'erflows with gladness, and goes leaping and dancing.[2]

Yet it is certainly difficult to mesh such an idea of grace with the scheme of irresistible compulsion, of almost mechanical causality, which pervades at least the treatise On the Bondage of the Will.[3] And in the passage cited there is no explicit connection of the idea of God's evocation of love with the concepts of providence and predestination. It may be safe, therefore, to conclude that there is an unresolved tension here between Luther's keener personalistic religious insight and the motives which impelled him to use such absolutistic and mechanical expressions.

Some of those motives are apparent. One was simply reliance upon the word of Scripture. There are plenty of Biblical passages which seem to ascribe all power to God, so that

---

[1] Calhoun, p. 360. This would, of course, be compatible with the view of divine power in the Platonic Idea of the Good (ignoring the doctrine of the Demiurge), or the Aristotelian deity. But in both these cases deity is thoroughly rational and impersonal, and also really inactive--all ideas which are antithetic to Luther's doctrine. It has to be an active, outgoing, personal, and humanly apprehensible love on the part of God to accord with Luther's thought.

[2] Luther, Works, III, 128 f.

[3] A notable example is found on p. 208, where man is compared to an axe which the divine energy ceaselessly and mechanically uses.

Luther, with his almost desperate clinging to the historical word of revelation[1] and his Scriptural principle of authority[2] would naturally be led to espouse it. We have noted that a radical depreciation of human powers is often coupled with doctrines which exalt divine initiative in an extreme degree.[3] In spite of his criticism of reason, Luther seemed to place great reliance upon sheerly logical considerations in advocating absolute Providence.[4] Above all his apprehension of God seemed to necessitate it: to be deity God must be the sufficient reason of all things,[5] immutably loving and hating from all eternity (and here Luther gives supralapsarian predestination one of the clearest statements in all literature),[6] foreknowing without any doubt or alteration all things,[7] and doing them all of perfectly fixed purpose.[8]

For these, and perhaps other intellectual reasons,

---

[1] Cf. Bainton, p. 261.

[2] Luther, Works, III, 370 ff.; VI, 371, 402 f.; Psalm 62:11; Jer. 18:6; I Chron. 29:11 f., etc.

[3] The title On the Bondage of the Will for his chief work of systematic thought, is evidence in point.

[4] Smith, Life and Letters of Luther, p. 260. Cf. Smith and Gallinger, p. 197, where he says sound doctrine is more important than manner of life. Also the comments of Oswald Spengler, The Decline of the West, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), II, 298. Luther, of course, generally considered other Reformers, not to say Papists, more rationalistic than himself; Smith and Gallinger, pp. 114, 230 f.

[5] Luther, Bondage of the Will, pp. 201, 226.

[6] Ibid., p. 240.

[7] Ibid., p. 27.

[8] Smith and Gallinger, p. 216.

Luther clung to the doctrine of absolute Providence. In it he also found positive religious meaning. He laid considerable stress upon the confidence it gives one to believe that all things are in the hand of God. "The greatest and only consolation of Christians in their adversities, is the knowing that God lies not, but does all things immutably, and that his will cannot be resisted, changed, or hindered."[1] With this confidence Christ's command to "be not anxious" can be fulfilled.[2]

The difficulty is, of course, that the logic of such an absolute Providence, specifically determining not only the vicissitudes of this life but the eternal destiny of souls, seems inevitably to make God the author of evil. Does Luther acquiesce in this radical dissociation of God from all moral norms?

God and Evil

Although Luther says candidly that God often seems to be the author of evil--He is such "that before he can be God he must first appear to be the devil"[3]--yet it is very difficult to find evidence that he ever actually drew that conclusion. Even the plight of the wicked while being miserably destroyed body and soul in hell displays His "high, unspeak-

---

[1] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p.32. Cf. p. 287; also the beautiful statement in *Works*, II, 369 f., and the illustration of this view in his own life, *Ibid*., II, 397-400.

[2] *Ibid*., VI. 394.

[3] Bainton, p.218, citing WA, XXXI, 1, 249.

able justice," and that "Hell, no less than heaven, is full of God and the highest good."[1]

External or Physical Evil

To be sure, Luther does not hesitate to ascribe physical evil to God; indeed he says the refusal to do so is a transgression of the First Commandment.[2] For such "evil" does not constitute a theological problem for Luther. Religion is primarily an inward thing, so "what can it profit the soul if the body fare well, be free and active, eat, drink and do as it pleases? . . . On the other hand, how will ill health or imprisonment or hunger or thirst or any other external misfortune hurt the soul?"[3] Not only are such things indifferent so far as our real welfare is concerned; even so great a piece of trouble as the cruel warfare of the Turks may actually help us, by punishing our sins and chastening us.[4] Furthermore, "when death is in prospect and God withdraws Himself, his words show what kind of ideas a man, however holy he may be, has against God, when he gets the notion that God is not God, but only a judge and wrathful tyrant."[5] Trouble is thus a salutary test of faith. Again, since resignation to the divine will--which is "always best, lovable above all things and most to be desired"--is a prime virtue

---

[1] Luther, Works, I, 137.

[2] Ibid., II, 330 f. But another view is implied in Bondage of the Will, pp. 372 f.

[3] Luther, Works, II, 313.

[4] Ibid., III, 105 f.

[5] Ibid., VI, 383.

of the Christian, trouble helps to produce such a will.[1] And it actually purifies us by slaying and destroying our fiercest foe, namely, the sin that is within us.[2] Even the blessings of the wicked, instead of shadowing our faith, ought to exercise it and "become to us an incentive to hope for those blessings which are not seen, and to despise the evils which we suffer." Thus "all things work together for good unto His Saints."[3]

Dualism

At times Luther makes use of dualistic categories, ascribing evil to a bad will in man or Satan, set over against the good will of God. When God is said to harden or work evil in us, it is not that he actually creates evil, as a bad bartender might pour poison into a glass which was innocent in and of itself.[4] Men, and Satan, are not thus merely passive but rather each works continually according to his nature under the spur of the omnipotence of God.

> As we are evil by nature, God, who is truly good, carrying us along by his own action, according to the nature of his omnipotence, cannot do otherwise than do evil by us, as instruments, though he himself be good. . . .
>
> Thus God, finding the will of Satan evil, not creating it so, but leaving it while Satan sinningly commits the evil, carries it along by his working, and moves it which way he will; though that will ceases not to be evil by this motion of God.[5]

---

[1] Luther, *Works*, II, 378 f. [2] *Ibid.*, I, 158.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 161; cf. III, 128 f.

[4] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, p. 210.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 211; also clearly stated, pp. 207-9

Now obviously this will not wash, logically, being completely incompatible with the kind of absolute Providence which we have already found Luther advocating. And further to confuse the argument, he adds in this same passage that God "overrules that evil well, to his own glory and to our salvation,"[1] thus simply denying the reality he is trying to explain. It is the evil which leads to damnation which is just the heart of the problem!

But while it is impossible to accept this argument as showing what Luther tries to make it show, it does cast a revealing light upon his own wrestling with the problem. He will not ascribe evil to God. In this context his idea of Satan, as contending with God for the chance to ride man's will, is suggestive.[2] But here again the picture is complicated by the suggestion that it is God's own omnipotence which leaves Satan to reign in peace and keep his palace undisturbed.[3] Furthermore, he himself provides the principle for completely undercutting the dualistic argument here when he affirms that he who can prevent injury and does not, is guilty of the injury.[4] Less confusing and confused are passages where a straight-out conflict between God and Satan is described, as is done particularly in some statements about the work of Christ.[5]

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 211.

[2] Ibid., pp. 61 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 209.

[4] Luther, Works, IV, 152.

[5] Ibid., III, 178.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that this dualism of God and Satan, with the evil will of man a slave and/or ally of the latter, was *practically* of great importance for Luther, even though logically there is no place for it in his system (unless by a kind of *tour de force* Satan were to be identified with the wrath of God--something which not even the Swedish interpreters of Luther have attempted, as far as I know).[1]

Other Solutions for the Problem of Evil

For the resolution of this problem Luther has a number of other suggestions. Most important, perhaps, is that favorite of apologists in all ages: the idea that in the future life God will be vindicated:

> The whole of this insolvable question is solved in one word.--There is a life after this life: in which will be punished and repaid, every thing that is not punished and repaid here: for this life is nothing more than an entrance on, and a beginning of, the life which is to come![2]

Likewise invoking this eschatological perspective is Luther's reference to the "three lights" which illumine man's understanding.

> By the light of nature, it is insolvable *how* it can be just, that the good man should be afflicted and the wicked should prosper: but this is solved by the light of grace. By the light of grace it is insolvable, *how* God can damn him, who, by his own powers, can do nothing but sin and become guilty. . . .But the light of glory. . . .will shew, that God. . . .is of righteousness most perfect and most

---

[1] Cf. Carlson, pp. 71 f. Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, II, 296, suggests the common view of a genuine dualism in Luther.

[2] Luther, *Bondage of the Will*, pp. 372 f.

> manifest; in order that we may, in the meantime, believe it, being admonished and confirmed by that example of the light of grace, which solves that which is as great a miracle to the light of nature![1]

And again this suggests yet another familiar answer: the solution of the problem is simply _faith_, believing stubbornly against all appearances.[2]

Sometimes Luther seems to say that hell and the suffering of the damned is a purely inward thing--real, but essentially a matter of an evil mind. "I think the Scriptures show that the pains of hell. . .are fear, terror, horror, the desire for flight, and despair," coming from a bad conscience, weak in faith and love.[3] "Hell, purgatory, and heaven seem to differ as do despair, almost-despair, and the assurance of safety."[4] If Luther left some room for human freedom of faith, this might mitigate the problem considerably; and no doubt, _practically_, Luther did assume such freedom. But it is logically incompatible with his doctrine of omnipotence. And, of course, for God to harden men and damn them to "great and eternal torments," even if these are subjective, still leaves Him "iniquitous, cruel, intolerable,"[5] so far as rational judgment can see.

Again, it may be some help to see that "when we suffer, when we die. . .it is not we, or we alone, but that Christ and the Church are in pain, are suffering, are dying

---

[1] Luther, _Bondage of the Will_, p. 374.

[2] _Ibid._, p. 58.

[3] Luther, _Works_, III, 39.

[4] _Ibid._, I, 31.

[5] Luther, _Bondage of the Will_, p. 227.

with us."[1] Indeed, in view of his Christology Luther may be held to say that God Himself suffers with us, for the humanity of Christ is ubiquitous, and Christ is practically identical with God. Luther came very close to patripassionism and boldly used such expressions as "God suffered," or "God died," familiar to the Monophysites of an earlier age.[2] This is a devotional rather than theological solution perhaps, though to affirm that God suffers with his creature is to say something very significant about the divine love. The suggestion is not, however, at all fully worked out.

The conclusion seems to be that Luther tries in a number of ways to avoid the conclusion from his doctrines of predestination and providence that God is actually and directly responsible for evil. He denies the importance of physical evil; he invokes quasi-dualistic principles to divide responsibility; he appeals to a vindication in the future life, as well as to the principle that we can't possibly judge God here and now; and he posits divine sympathy with human troubles. These do not solve the problem perhaps, but they show clearly enough his concern to sustain the essential goodness of God.

---

[1] Luther, Works, I, 166 f.

[2] Schaff, Creeds, I, 320; n.2 cites EA XXX, 204 on this point. Cf. Franz Hildebrandt, From Luther to Wesley (London: Lutterworth Press, 1951), pp. 35 f. Also H. R. Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ ("International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), pp. 230 ff.

God's Moral Character: His Goodness

Luther's writings are full of passages which declare the goodness of God and his nature as love. Taken at face value and by themselves they would settle at once the question of God's relation to moral norms. The question is too complex to permit this, yet such statements must be given weight.

As we have seen, God is always called "just," which would be an aspect of His goodness; but as we have also seen, his "justice" is radically reinterpreted to mean "righteousness," i.e., saving love.[1] So we shall not deal further with the topic here.

Wrath and Love

There is a certain ambiguity introduced, no doubt, by Luther's doctrine of the double aspect of God, as hidden and revealed, wrath and love, naked and veiled.[2] Is God both loving goodness, and something else? Such a conclusion is strongly suggested, yet Luther tries to avoid it in at least two ways. He quite consistently affirms that God is to be known only through Christ, and that Christ reveals God as He truly is, in His own nature. Therefore, outside of Christ He seems to be, and is, an angry God, a naked divine majesty which is a consuming fire. But this is not His "proper" na-

---

[1] Cf. supra, p. 69 ff.

[2] Cf. supra, p. 43 ff.

ture.[1] Second, he interprets God's wrath, at least part of the time, as nothing other than His love in action. That is, because God takes His love infinitely seriously, and takes man likewise seriously, resistance to His love inevitably produces a terribly serious reaction without which His love would be only sentimental.[2] "The love that is known in redemption is not a love that compromises with evil, but a love that is intent upon destroying it." The "wrath" that results can only be overcome by actually overcoming human resistance and bringing men into fellowship with Himself.[3] This is the work of His grace, in Christ.

The Divine Goodness

In his classic definition of God in the Larger Catechism, Luther connects the very meaning of "God" with "good." "A God is that to which we look for all good and where we resort for help."[4] His righteousness is most perfect.[5] It is His loving goodness, revealed intimately in our hearts, which evokes that responsive love which is our being as Christians.[6] Indeed, contrary to the idea that "Christ has no other honour than to sit at God's right hand on a velvet

---

[1] Brunner, pp. 169 ff.; citing many references in WA and EA.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Carlson, pp. 71 ff.; cf. pp. 143 f.

[4] Kerr, pp. 23 f., quoting Lenker Ed., XXIV, 44-48; cf. Hildebrandt, pp. 33 f.

[5] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 374.

[6] Works, III, 128 f.

cushion and to have the angels singing and playing to him,"[1] Luther finds that the divine glory itself consists in ministering, not being ministered unto: "Now think we poor fools that 'honour' is derived from someone bestowing his virtue, goodness, and benefit upon others. For to be honored and waited upon by others is a bad honour and not a divine honour."[2]

In the ultimate analysis, then, God is simply and solely love. "Divine nature is nothing else but pure beneficence and. . .kindness and love towards man."[3] "If anyone would paint and aptly portray God, then he must draw a picture of pure love, as if the Divine nature were nothing but a furnace and fire of such love, which fills heaven and earth."[4] Contemplating the death of Christ, "how can we here say anything else but that God is nothing but an abyss of eternal love?"[5] Aulén even attempts, with some apparent success, to make out that Luther conceived the divine power as at bottom qualitatively defined as love.[6]

Yet questions remain, to be sure. This love so often seems to express itself in ways which are unlike what men know

---

[1] Hildebrandt, p. 36, n.4, quoting WA XXIII, 155. 15 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, quoting WA XXIII, 157. 2 ff.

[3] Nygren, Part II, Vol. II, 502, n.1, quoting WA 10. 1. 1., p. 100, 17 ff.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 506, quoting WA 36, p. 424. 16 ff.

[5] *Ibid.*, quoting WA 36, p. 426, 34 ff.

[6] Carlson, pp. 89, 144 f. Cf. Calhoun's hypothesis, *supra*, pp. 83 f.

as love. Nygren's analysis admitting that Christian love, whose prototype is God's agape, "is by nature wholly other than human love," makes this otherness to consist in its absolute spontaneity and creativity--i.e., it is more purely "loving" than anything our normal experience shows.[1] On the other hand, there are passages which suggest that Luther thinks of God's love as a kind of excellence which is not just more "loving" than we can comprehend, but actually a particular kind of intrinsic goodness. We are enjoined to

> love and praise God for Himself alone, and in the right order, and not selfishly to seek anything at His hands. This is done when one praises God because He is good, regards only His bare goodness, and finds one's joy and pleasure in that alone. . . .
>
> But the impure and perverted lovers. . .neither love nor praise His bare goodness. . . .But as soon as ever He hides His face and withdraws the rays of His goodness, leaving them bare and in misery, their love and praise are at an end. They are unable to love and praise the bare, unfelt goodness that is hidden in God.
>
> . . . .
>
> The bare goodness of God is what ought rather to be preached and known above all else, and we ought to learn that, even as God saves us out of pure goodness, without any merit of works, so we in our turn should do the works without reward or selfseeking, for the sake of the bare goodness of God.[2]

This is puzzling. If it is taken simply as an injunction to avoid self-seeking piety, it raises no problems. But it seems to go beyond that and speak of a goodness which may be without expression. Yet, in fact Luther always turns immediately to say that it is expressed!

Likewise, when Luther speaks of the incomprehensi-

---

[1] Nygren, Part II, Vol. II, 508.

[2] Luther, Works, III, 140, 143.

bility of the love of God, its mystery, he seems to mean generally that it is so great, so free, that human common sense, with its inevitable egocentricity and self-seeking, cannot quite comprehend it.[1] And yet this is not always so, for sometimes His righteousness is discussed in view of its apparent deficiency by human standards. For example, we feel keenly His "inestimable mercy" in forgiving us when we consider how many others He has condemned, who are less wicked than we are! But what then of His love for them?[2] On the theory that our human standards of equity and of love may be inadequate to the dimensions of God's being and activity,[3] the interpretation of this "bare goodness" as supreme though unperceived excellence may stand; but our hearts remain uneasy.

Summary and Conclusions

The Reformation was propelled into history by the power and intensity of Luther's concern about the character of God.[4] In the agony of his search for assurance of salvation he discovered the gospel promise that God is love, that His grace and mercy are free to all who call upon Him in true faith. Yet Luther was never able to rest with the simple statement that God is love and nothing else. He must also be Power, all the power there is, freely exercised in an absolute sovereignty which determines the course of the world down to

---

[1] Bainton, p. 223.

[2] Luther, Works, I, 127.

[3] Luther, Bondage of the Will, pp. 370 ff.

[4] Cf. Bainton, p. 220.

its finest detail. No one need try to save himself, for he cannot; only God can save him, and if he chooses will give him His grace freely. If He does not choose--then hell. And thus the mystery of the evil and trouble of the cosmos is compounded with the mystery of lost human souls, who are not given the grace to accept the unbounded and free grace of God. In God, at once the Father of Christ and truly revealed through him, and at the same time the Determiner of all things whose glory is displayed in hell as well as in heaven, in storm and fire as well as in children and hearthside, Luther found a double aspect, bound in a tension which he never completely resolved: the hidden God who is the naked God of searing majesty; and the revealed God, veiled to our poor weak eyes in the gracious lineaments of Christ. Which is the real God? Luther never stopped saying that both were real, and so saying that God gives us the norm of perfect love but is also above and beyond any norm whatever which our moral reason can formulate.

Certainly Luther never fully worked out and admitted the consequences of his not infrequent suggestions that God is entirely beyond good and evil. He tried to interpret the wrath of the hidden God as the reverse side of the love of the revealed God, which is primary. Ascribing terrible freedom to God, he yet believed that it could be justified in terms of His rights as creator. Refusing to make God rational, he insisted that the faith which is higher than reason discloses a goodness not below but above that which reason, which sees

only the omnipotence and eternity and sovereignty, can discover. The laws, natural and Scriptural by which men must live, are depreciated at times; and yet the function of the gospel and the Spirit is to enable men to fulfill them. They must represent some ordered purpose in God. God is just, not simply as men are, but with a justice which carries the quality of redeeming love.

When Luther faces squarely the question of God's responsibility for evil he sometimes assigns it directly to God's unsearchable purposes and prerogatives--but he does not leave it at that for long. In many ways which we have traced, he seeks to show that God only seems to do evil, and that there is a good reason in Him, or a bad reason outside Him, for its occurrence.

We conclude then, that in spite of enormous concessions to a sheerly numinous and power-centered view of God, Luther always reserves the last word for divine goodness. He never relates God to a standard of moral excellence outside Him with which He may be compared. Rather, the heart of his message seems to be that God's nature itself, as a mystery of love, is the ultimate standard of moral excellence, the norm for His own action, as it is for ours as we are called to become Christ to our neighbour.[1] In terms of the contrast formulated in the Introduction, Luther clings to both the metaphysical and the moral supremacy of God, but in the last analysis makes the latter decisive.

---

[1] Luther, Works, II, 337 f.

CHAPTER III

HULDREICH ZWINGLI

Page

Concerning Zwingli Himself 101

- His Position in Protestant Theology 101
- Personal Character and Piety 104
- Sources of Zwingli's Thought 106

Doctrine of God 112

- The Goodness of God 112
    - Goodness as kindness and mercy
    - Goodness as justice
    - The breadth of divine goodness
    - Goodness as metaphysical perfection
- The Being of God 120
- God's Attributes as Creator 123
    - Doctrine of creation
    - Infinity and eternity
    - Otherness
- Divine Wisdom 126
- Freedom of the Divine Will 129
    - God and law

Divine Providence 134

- The Problem of Evil 136

Election 140

Conclusion 143

CHAPTER III

HULDREICH ZWINGLI

Concerning Zwingli Himself

His Position in Protestant Theology

Huldreich Zwingli[1] is known as the "Reformer of German Switzerland" and thus as the spiritual father of a vigorous member of the Protestant family of churches which has produced a number of important and creative theologians, including Karl Barth and Emil Brunner in this century. Nevertheless his influence upon the shaping of Protestant thought must on the whole be accounted rather small. Brunner, for example, who has taught in Zwingli's own city of Zurich during most of his life, refers to him a number of times in the volumes of his *Dogmatics*, and always treats his name with respect as one of the Reformation "Fathers," along with Luther and Calvin. But in the few places where he actually deals with Zwingli's doctrine it is usually in terms of sharp criticism![2]

---

[1] This spelling of the name follows that of Samuel Macauley Jackson in his *Huldreich Zwingli, The Reformer of German Switzerland, 1484-1531* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901). Jackson is the most notable American Zwingli scholar and was largely responsible for the publication of the English translation of his Latin works, which has provided the chief basis for this chapter.

Another spelling is given by Samuel Simpson, *Life of Ulrich Zwingli, The Swiss Patriot and Reformer* (New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1902).

[2] Brunner, *Doctrine of God*, pp. 81, 296, 321 ff. A

Nevertheless Zwingli is a far from negligible figure. His "Commentary on True and False Religion" of 1525,[1] the only systematic presentation of his theology as a whole, is a comprehensive and balanced effort at stating the evangelical faith to which, for the early Reformation period, only the *Loci Communes* of Melanchthon and the *Institutes* of Calvin are comparable.[2] Although there can be no question that Calvin is the Father of Reformed theology, Zwingli may claim a kind of secondary parenthood. Certainly his thought exerted no considerable influence on Calvin--the differences in temper and piety between the two were too great for that.[3] Yet both were men of reason who ascribed absolute priority to the Scriptural principle, interpreted the Bible on the assumption that it must be rationally coherent, and did not flinch from the consequences of rigorous logic in the exposition of their

---

notable exception is Brunner's agreement with Zwingli on the meaning of original sin, which the former interpreted as inherited corruption or vitiation but not as inherited guilt; see Brunner's *Man in Revolt, A Christian Anthropology*, trans. Olive Wyon (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), p. 384. Cf. the treatment of Zwingli in George Park Fisher, *History of Christian Doctrine* ("International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), pp. 285-290.

[1] In Huldreich Zwingli, *Latin Works*, ed. Samuel Macauley Jackson, William John Hinke, Clarence Nevin Heller, trans. Henry Preble *et al* (Philadelphia: The Heidelberg Press, 1912-1929), III, 43-343.

[2] *Ibid*., III, 3 f.

[3] A brief but careful examination of this question of Zwingli's influence on Calvin is given by Wendel, pp. 99 f. He points out the sharp differences in temperament between the men and their differing views on various questions, rejecting decisively the possibility of any substantial influence. Cf. Fisher, p. 298.

doctrine.[1] Both were relatively insensitive to the mystical and imaginative side of religion which tends to issue in a "high" interpretation of the sacraments and a richly sensuous form of worship. Their doctrines of the Lord's Supper stood in common contrast with Luther's, although Calvin retained a bit more of the medieval heritage of "substantial" thinking and hence seemed to give slightly more emphasis to the "real presence" of Christ.[2] Both men had a common background of humanism and both turned to the reform of popish abominations with a similar temper. Thus their separate influences rather readily mingled in the common stream of Reformed thought.

There are other aspects of Zwingli's significance. He was, as Richardson suggests, "the one Reformer whose style has equal charm and lucidity"[3] and this fact has given his writings continuing persuasiveness. Schaff claims that along with Luther and Knox he is the most "popular" of all the Reformation heroes, a fact which was exhibited in the widely observed fourth centennial of his birth, held in 1884.[4] Zwingli is

---

[1] Frank Hugh Foster, "Zwingli's Theology, Philosophy and Ethics," in Jackson, Zwingli, p. 396.

[2] Cf. the accounts of the Marburg Colloquy in Bainton, pp. 318 ff., and in Jackson, pp. 307 ff., Calvin's doctrine is set forth in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, trans. John Allen (7th American ed.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, n.d.), II, 644 ff. Zwingli's views are found in Latin Works, II, 49 ff., 107 ff., 248 ff. Cyril C. Richardson has given a very discerning account of Zwingli's doctrine in Zwingli and Cranmer on the Eucharist (Evanston, Ill.: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1949), pp. 4 ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 4.

[4] Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892), VII, 199.

probably the one out of all the great Continental Reformers who, if he should reappear today, would have least change to make in adapting himself to characteristically modern ways of thought.[1] His views on the salvation of children, his liberal concept of the workings of the Holy Spirit and his impulse to attribute religious value to moral excellence wherever it appears have been almost universally adopted by the spiritual posterity of men who opposed him sharply in his own time.[2]

Personal Character and Piety

Much of Zwingli's influence in his own day--an influence which was limited in scope but very intense in Zurich at least--can doubtless be traced to personal characteristics which made him a natural leader, able to attract men to himself and to win their minds by the power of his thought and rhetoric. These same characteristics help account for the liberality of thought which makes him attractive to later generations. The other side of this picture is that his life was not so much deep as active, and that his piety lacked the lyrical heights and numinous depths of Luther's and also the keen, stern rigor of Calvin's. His description of himself is revealing:

> Even if a rather cheerful life has been our lot, it has

---

[1] Jackson, pp. ix f.

[2] Cf. Schaff, History, VII, 199. Sherwood Wirt, "The Zwinglian Conception of the Church" (Pacific School of Religion: Unpublished B. D. thesis, 1943), passim, makes much of this. Richardson points out that except for the Lutherans virtually all modern Protestants have substantially accepted Zwingli's interpretation of the Communion; cf. pp. 15, 17.

> never degenerated into luxury and shamelessness, nor, on the other hand, turned into cruelty, arrogance or obstinacy. . . .Our learning, although greater than our enemies can bear or in the faces of their conscience can despise, is notwithstanding far less than our followers think we possess.[1]

His Roman opponents called him "The guitar player and evangelist upon the flute"[2]--an invidious reference to light-hearted musical interests which once even tempted him to become a monk in order to enjoy musical society.[3] More serious, a letter of 1517 shows that Zwingli was at that time, while an active parish priest, living an unchaste life without any appreciation of its guilt.[4] Students of his life find a change in him about the year 1520, resulting in a greater depth and religious sensitivity and increased reforming passion.[5] Yet two years later, at the height of his reforming activity in Zurich, he was involved in an irregular alliance with a charming parishioner. This was, to be sure, one of the "clerical marriages" sanctioned by public opinion, yet it troubled his

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 60.

[2] Jackson, p. 119, n. 1; 224.

[3] Thomas M. Lindsay, A History of the Reformation ("International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916), II, 25.

[4] Jackson, p. 119.

[5] Jackson, p. 124; Lindsay, II, 36. Usteri, Köhler, and others attribute this change to Zwingli's harrowing experience of the plague in 1519. Rich disagrees with this explanation but finds the change a reality. He thinks the "existential-theocentric" turn in Zwingli's course was due to the conviction forced upon him by events that only the power of God Himself could set forward the reformation of Christendom. See Arthur Rich, Die Anfänge der Theologie Huldrych Zwinglis (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1949), pp. 105, 119-123.

contemporary, Bucer, at least, and seems to show a continuing strain of "worldliness" and insensitivity.[1] His preaching was certainly effective, "lively and helpful, and made a sensation," but it would hardly be called profound.[2] His understanding of faith was certainly more than a mere intellectual acceptance of truth, and perhaps more even than belief together with trust. He expounded it as a being grasped by God Himself and issuing in the transformation of life.[3] Yet it can hardly be compared with the faith of which Luther wrote out of his own experience.

Sources of Zwingli's Thought

The two chief sources of Zwingli's theological ideas and reforming interest are quite clear. They were the Bible, particularly the New Testament, and humanistic culture. The latter came first. A letter of 1523 is very revealing:

> I will not, dearest brethren in Christ Jesus, withhold from you how I came to the opinion and firm belief that we required no other mediator than Christ; also that between God and us no one can mediate except Christ alone. Eight or nine years ago I read a consolatory poem on the Lord Jesus, written by the profoundly learned Erasmus of Rotterdam, in which with many very beautiful words Jesus complains that men did not seek all good in

---

[1] Jackson, pp. 231 f. Cf. letter of Bucer to Zwingli, *ibid.*, p. 236.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[3] Richardson, pp. 5 ff., gives a very discerning exposition of Zwingli's concept of faith. Yet in spite of the language of such passages as that in the "Exposition of the Christian Faith," *Latin Works*, II, 252 f., which speaks of despair and existential fear out of which faith brings us confidence and joy, I can hardly find grounds for believing that Zwingli himself ever experienced this very profoundly.

> Him, so that He might be to them a fountain of all good, a Saviour, comfort and treasure of the soul. So I reflected, Well, if it is really so, why then should we seek help of any creature. . . .I began to examine the biblical and patristic writings to find out if I could learn from them concerning the intercession of saints. To be brief, I have not found it at all in the Bible.[1]

Later on, after Zwingli had come out definitely against the old church a break occurred with Erasmus. But even Rich, who is eager to find evidence of the power of other motives than humanism in Zwingli's life, admits the continuing importance of Erasmian thinking.[2]

Luther apparently exercised relatively little influence upon Zwingli. In the latter's "Exposition and Proof of the Conclusions of the Articles," an early popular writing on his influential "Sixty-Seven Articles" which were the first creed of the Reformed wing of Protestantism,[3] Zwingli asserted his entire independence of Luther and repudiated the term "Lutheran" as applied to himself or his teaching. He claimed that he had never even heard of Luther before 1519, except that the latter had published something on indulgences, whereas he had long held reforming opinions on that subject and others.[4] Rather he ascribed much influence to his teacher

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 86 f. Cf. other correspondence, ibid., pp. 78 ff., 83. Cf. the account of his humanistic education in Jackson, pp. 50 ff., Lindsay, II, 25.

[2] Rich, pp. 151 ff.

[3] Schaff, Creeds, III, 197 ff.

[4] Jackson, pp. 197, 59 f. Rich, pp. 93 ff. makes a careful study of Zwingli's reading of Luther for the formative period of his development as a Reformer and concludes that the latter could not have had a decisive influence.

for a few months in Basel in 1505, Thomas Wyttenbach and also confessed again his great debt to Erasmus.[1] He had also been influenced by Pico della Mirandola and possessed several of his books.[2] His objections to the Roman church seem to have been largely those of a rationalist and humanist against the mass of superstitious and corrupt practices which had grown up under its banner. His letter of 1518 to Beatus Rhenanus described the activities of a peddler of indulgences with ridicule rather than with indignation; and in reply his friend praised Zwingli's effort to "bring forth to the people the pure philosophy of Christ."[3] Among those whom Zwingli expected to meet in heaven were Socrates, Plato, Pindar, Aristides, Numa, Cato, Scipio, Seneca--and even Hercules and Theseus! What tribute to classical learning could be more touching and sincere than this conferring of salva-

---

[1] Jackson, pp. 58 f., 197. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 84 f.

[3] Jackson, p. 107, n. 1. (italics ours). This letter is really an extraordinary commentary on Zwingli's teaching; it speaks of the "nonsense about the power of the Pope, remission, purgatory, counterfeit miracles by the saints, contracts, vows, pains of the damned, Antichrist" which the Roman church teaches. But you, says the friend, set forth the whole doctrine of Christ succinctly: that Christ came to show men the will of God, and that all the values of this world are to be contemned for the sake of heaven, "to teach us peace and concord and the attractive community of all possession (for Christianity is nothing else)--even as Plato dreamed. . .for he is to be numbered among the great prophets." This, then, is the gospel: Christ as teacher, depreciation of the body and this world for the sake of the other, the communism of Plato, that great prophet, and even a hint of universalism! Granted that this is the one-sided reaction of a humanistic friend to Zwingli's message, yet it must be set alongside his more orthodox and conventional statements and confessions to show the spirit in which he must have worked.

tion upon even its mythical heroes![1] All this gives color to a biographer's estimate that "Zwingli was a child of the schools. His advent as a reformer. . .was the natural and logical result of the expansive and liberalizing tendencies of the humanistic learning on a mind earnestly bent upon truth."[2] But this is not the whole story.[3]

His own testimony and the records of his study show clearly that together with the classical humanistic influence on his thought there was mingled that of the Scriptures. To be sure, careful attention to the Bible, the idea that the church ought to be reformed by a return to the pure teaching of Christ, and an insistence upon judging all religious questions in the light of Scripture were all characteristic of humanism itself.[4] Yet the temper of a truly Biblical theology was bound to be markedly different from one formed predominantly by classical humanistic interests.

Foster ascribes much in Zwingli's thought to the influence of the Old Testament, particularly in respect to his doctrine of providence.[5] In this he may be correct, although

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 272.

[2] Simpson, Life of Zwingli, p. 51.

[3] Rich, pp. 154, 164 ff., sees the crisis of 1520 as a high moment of "existential-theocratic" faith on the part of Zwingli; but followed by a loss of confidence in the sheer preaching of the Word of God and a relapse into speculative theology of the type of the sermon "On Providence."

[4] Henry S. Lucas, The Renaissance and the Reformation ("Harper's Historical Series"; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1934), chap. xxxvii.

[5] Foster, Zwingli, p. 367.

he offers little evidence and it seems certain that Zwingli's study of Hebrew, although begun fairly early, gave him trouble for many years.[1] On the other hand, about 1513 he systematically set out to teach himself Greek in order to "learn the teaching of Christ from the original sources."[2] When he came to Zurich he brought with him a copy of the Pauline epistles which he had transcribed with his own hand from Erasmus' text, in order to have them at hand and in order to memorize them. This he seems actually to have accomplished.[3] At the very beginning of his ministry as people's priest at the Zurich Cathedral he announced that he would give a continuous exposition of the gospel of Matthew, interpreting it by the Scriptures themselves and not by the traditional ecclesiastical commentaries.[4] This was the method he had himself followed in the studies which gradually led him to reforming opinions, to leave the traditional interpreters and "learn the meaning of the Word out of the Word itself."[5] It also continued a pulpit practice begun in

---

[1] Oskar Farner, *Huldrych Zwingli, Seine Entwicklung zum Reformator, 1506-1520* (Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946), p. 401. Unfortunately the section on this question has been omitted from the published edition of Edwin Künzli's study of Zwingli as Biblical expositor; *Zwingli als Ausleger von Genesis und Exodus* (Buchdruckerei Berichthaus Zürich, 1950). Cf. Jackson, p. 135.

[2] Jackson, p. 82, quoting the "Exposition" of 1523; cf. nn. 2 and 3. Zwingli learned the language so well that he wished to use the Greek Testament at the Marburg Colloquy, but Luther demurred; *ibid.*, p. 314.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 121 f. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 83 f.

1516 of regularly expounding the gospel passage in the Mass.[1] He not only carried through his exposition of Matthew but on the Sundays of the next four years he systematically preached through Acts, I Timothy, Galatians, II Timothy, I and II Peter and Hebrews as well.[2] The "Commentary on True and False Religion" represents a clear example of Biblical as against speculative theology, although it was the Bible read through different spectacles from Luther's or Calvin's.

It is, then, a theologian whose mind was saturated with classical learning and humanistic principles as well as with the Bible, particularly the New Testament, whose thought about the goodness of God we must now examine. He was a man of cheerful and reasonable temper, clear-headed, practical, of liberal mind and catholic sympathies, with a firm confidence in logic[3]--but with no profound sense of sin, no overwhelming awe of the divine majesty, no existential dread of the wrath of the living God, and no transforming experience of redeeming love striking miraculously into his life.[4]

---

[1] Jackson, p. 108.

[2] Ibid., pp. 122 f. In view of his very great emphasis upon the all-determining providence of God it is interesting to note that neither this list, nor the Psalms on which he also preached regularly at this time, contains any of the classic sources of predestinarian doctrine. This suggests that its real source in his thought was classical learning and his own reason, rather than the Scriptures. Jackson says that this preaching was chiefly practical and moralistic rather than theological.

[3] A logic which his arguments usually composed in a tremendous hurry, often fail to display! Cf. Lindsay, p. 33.

[4] Cf. the characterization ibid., p. 27.

Doctrine of God

The Goodness of God

Zwingli never leaves us in any doubt about the goodness of God, but he does present us with a somewhat bewildering variety of interpretations of that belief. These are held together by references to Scripture texts and by a sort of logic, but apparently represent fundamentally diverse ideas.

Goodness as kindness and mercy.--Although Zwingli never soars as high as Luther in his descriptions of the divine love--a term which appears very infrequently in his published writings--the evangelical note is not entirely lacking. He speaks with feeling of the

> goodness displayed. . .in the restoration of man. For when He might have restored the fallen in any way He pleased, He preferred to adopt none other than that by which He who had been man's Creator became his Redeemer, that there might be no less goodness and righteousness in the redemption than in the creation.[1]

But then the argument takes a slightly unexpected turn. Zwingli goes on to conclude that the redeeming work of Christ shows primarily that God dislikes sin very much and that "nothing is so pleasing to Him as devotion to righteousness and integrity," rather than expatiating upon the divine mercy. One gets the feeling that the goodness spoken of here is not so much free grace and mercy as divine rectitude and wisdom.[2]

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 178. [2] Ibid., pp. 178 f.

In his "Exposition of the Christian Faith" Zwingli again deals with Christ as the gracious gift of God to men, but inverts the evangelical order so that Christ becomes chiefly a confirmation of God's mercy rather than a wondrous and awe-inspiring revelation of it. The argument begins with the assumption of divine goodness:

> This God we know is by nature good, for whatever He is, He is by nature. Moreover that is good, which is gentle and righteous. Gentleness without righteousness would be no longer gentleness, but carelessness or fear. On the other hand, if you do not temper righteousness with goodness or equity, it becomes the utmost injustice and violence. Since, therefore, we recognize that God is by nature good, we confess at the same time that He is mild, gentle and bountiful, as well as holy, righteous, and inviolable.[1]

Against the background of this postulate that God is good and hence must be both merciful and unchangeably just, we understand why Christ took flesh to suffer on our behalf:

> The Son of God has, therefore, been given to us as a confirmation of His mercy, as a pledge of pardon, as the price of righteousness, and as a rule of life, to make us sure of the grace of God, and to teach us the law of living. Who could worthily extol the greatness of this divine goodness and generosity? We had deserved to be disowned, and He honors us with being chosen. We had destroyed the way of life, and He has restored it. Thus, then, we have been redeemed and renewed by divine goodness so completely as to be acceptable through His mercy, and to be justified and blameless through His atoning sacrifice.[2]

Goodness as justice.--In all these passages we find Zwingli immediately connecting mercy with justice or equity. It becomes clear that for him "goodness" must include both elements. This passage is revealing:

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 242. [2] Ibid., p. 243.

> Goodness is. . .a sort of genus comprehending justice and kindness or mercy, not justice alone, so far as it is a species of goodness. But if we make justice a sort of genus, like goodness, so that justice shall contain in itself mercy and kindness, as the Holy Scriptures often use it. . .then I have no objection to the doctrine that justice is the origin of election and predestination. For justice and goodness will then be the same.[1]

Here Zwingli gives evidence of having made the discovery which was so epochal for Luther, that in the Bible the "injustice" of God is correlative with his mercy. But never having lived in mortal fear of sheerly retributive justice, the doughty Swiss is able to connect it with kindness in a very matter-of-fact way.

Elsewhere Zwingli gives expression to this faith in a divine goodness which is a happy combination of right reason or equity, and benevolence. He finds evidence for this in the very constitution of the world and in our experience in general. We perceive that man has a soul, and knows the true and right and holy. But if he were to live and die like the beasts this gift of intelligence and his aspiration toward virtue would be meaningless. Hence we must conclude that there is a supreme good, which must be a supreme moral intelligence or else "it will not satisfy the human mind. It is clear, therefore, that by ascending in this way from our intelligence we arrive at the Deity."[2]

Zwingli uses the traditional language of the satisfaction theories of the atonement in further underscoring the idea that the divine goodness maintains justice inviolate while offering mercy to sinful men.

---

[1] Zwingli, *Latin Works*, II, 181. [2] *Ibid*., p. 233.

> When the time came to reveal His goodness, which He had determined from eternity to display no less than His justice, God sent His Son to assume our nature in every part. . .in order that, being our brother and equal, He could be a mediator, to make a sacrifice for us to divine justice, which must remain holy and inviolate, no less than to His goodness. Thereby the world might be sure both of the appeasing of the justice and of the presence of the goodness of God.[1]

Election, therefore, is so arranged that it shows both God's kindness in choosing "whom He will"--a curious idea, incidentally, that the freedom of the choice, i.e., its arbitrariness, shows its goodness!--and His justice by making the elect His own only through the Victim offered to "satisfy divine justice."[2]

The breadth of divine goodness.--Nothing in Zwingli is more congenial than his emphasis upon the range and generosity of the divine goodness. What his conception lacked in height and depth of feeling it made up by its breadth. In his declaration "On Original Sin" he points out that since "everlasting life has nowhere been promised on the terms that unless one has been circumcised or baptized he shall in no wise attain it," we are hardly justified in consigning to hell all who happen not to have been so marked.

> They are wrong by the whole diameter of heaven who, even if they have names not only great but ancient, are in the habit of consigning to everlasting damnation, now

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 39.

[2] Ibid., pp. 39 f. To be sure, election was often held to be most clearly merciful just because it picked out, without any merits of their own, a certain number of naturally guilty men to receive the gratuitous favour of God. But Zwingli denies that all men are guilty by birth so the idea seems rather unusually illogical here.

> the children of Christians when they have not been baptised, now all those whom we call "the Gentiles." For what do we know of the faith each one has written in his heart by the hand of God?[1]

In evidence he cites the faith disclosed in a letter of "that holy man Seneca." Such faith exists outside the visible church, he argues, but not necessarily outside Christ. "For through Christ must come all who come to God."[2] In other words, he is on the way to expounding a cosmic Christ who is literally "the true light that enlightens every man."[3] In one very daring passage he asks

> whether Christ restored the whole race or only the church of the faithful? Though I might have answered this question in a few words to the effect that Christ benefited by His healing power exactly as much as Adam injured by sinning; that, further, Adam infected the whole lump with original sin, therefore Christ restored the whole, I have preferred not to put forth this opinion, both because some things seem to contradict it, and because I do not know whether anybody has held it.[4]

He is quite certain, at least, that the children of Christian parents are not only free from any guilt due to original sin, but are among the elect, and certain partakers in the covenant of God with His people.[5] He is equally sure that God will not reject any man of any time or place whose life testifies to his obedience to the law God had written on his heart.

> There has not been a good man and will not be a holy heart or faithful soul from the beginning of the world to the end thereof that you will not see in heaven with

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 12.

[2] Ibid., pp. 12 f. [3] John 1:9.

[4] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 23. [5] Ibid., pp. 18 ff., 43.

> God. And what can be imagined more glad, what more delightful, what, finally, more honorable than such a sight? To what can all our souls more justly bend all their strength than to the attainment of such a life?[1]

When Zwingli brings testimony in behalf of his arguments from outside the Bible he justifies the procedure by pointing out that the Holy Spirit has not confined its operation to the Scriptural writers but that all "writings are properly called sacred when they proclaim the thought of the holy, pure, eternal and infallible mind."[2]

> He who speaks the truth, speaks from God, and he who in this way climbs with his understanding from the things visible to the contemplation of the unseen God, does a thing, according to the testimony of Paul, worthy of God and himself, useful and not without divine illumination. I venture, therefore, to call a thing borrowed from the heathen divine, if only it is holy, religious, and irrefutable.[3]

A God communicating His goodness, wisdom, and light thus widely and freely is certainly exhibiting moral goodness, even though His gift takes more the form of cool rationality than of ecstatic joy or trembling piety in the soul of the recipient.

Behind this universalism, however, is a yet more fundamental idea about the divine goodness which accounts at once for the breadth of Zwingli's vision and the relative absence of reference to the kind of love and grace which were

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 272. Luther objected violently to this passage, declaring that it showed Zwingli had become a complete heathen. On occasion he was not above expressing something like the same opinion himself, as in his Sermon on Genesis 20. The idea was not really congenial to him, however; he had "a different spirit"! See ibid., n. 2.

[2] Ibid., p. 151.

[3] Ibid., p. 154.

so absorbing a topic for Luther and others who found themselves kindled by the message of the "pure Word." There was a reason for Zwingli's universalism, deeper than any merely personal character of liberality and catholic spirit. These were significant, no doubt, but the fact is that Zwingli was thinking of God in terms which made it quite impossible that He should be limited in the range of His goodness or that any utterance of truth or beauty should have any source but His own divine mind.

Goodness as metaphysical perfection.--Although Zwingli no doubt took perfectly seriously these traditional aspects of the divine goodness, such as justice and mercy, when he opens the heart of his systematic thought on the matter he seems in fact to be operating with a fundamental idea of a quite different kind. The clearest expression of this is found perhaps in the opening paragraphs of the sermon "On the Providence of God":

> Providence must exist, because the supreme good necessarily cares for and regulates all things.
>
> The supreme good is not so called because it is above all goods, as if there were some goods that were good in their own nature but were surpassed by this good, just as gold surpasses the value of silver though both are valuable. It is called the supreme good because it is the only thing good by nature, and every good that can be imagined is itself really this supreme good. This Christ set forth by the words: "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but God." In these words we see that God alone is good in the sense of being an absolutely and perfectly good being, and that consequently there can be nothing good which is not He, and, in short, that the things which are called good, as "all that he had made was very good," and "every creation of God's is good," are good not by nature but by sharing His goodness, or rather, by derivation. . . .
>
> Now to go to the root of the matter, it follows nec-

> essarily that what is good by nature and good in the highest degree, and whatever is good in itself, must also be true. And this the philosophers knew when they attributed at the same time the quality of truth to the good and only one. For, of course, the One must be good, they said, but cannot be good unless it is likewise true, that is, pure, genuine, clear, complete, simple and unchangeable.[1]

It is clear from this why Brunner affirms that Zwingli is really working with a Neoplatonist view of God.[2] Above all is the "One," whose "goodness" is that of being at once the substance of all that is and also completely transcendent of empirical reality--"pure, clear, genuine, complete, simple, unchangeable." It is actually a metaphysical "goodness" rather than a moral goodness which lies at the center of his thought. Other passages give strong support to this interpretation.

> This "Being" is as really good as it is being. For as it exists alone and of itself, so it is alone good, true, right, just, holy. . . .All the things which are are in Him and through Him. For since all the things which are are good, and yet God alone is good, all the things which are are God; i.e., the reason they exist is because God exists and is their essence. . . .
>
> This good, therefore, is not a thing idle or inert, so as to lie torpid and motionless, moving neither itself nor other things. . . .Indeed, it is called by the philosophers. . .the perfect, efficient, and consummating power, which, since it is perfect, will never cease, never rest, never waver, but continually so keep, direct, and govern everything that in all things made or done no fault can intervene able either to impede its power or to defeat its purpose.[3]

The Neoplatonic overtones here are accentuated by the assertion that existence *per se* is good, with the implication that evil can be nothing but a negative thing, a

---

[1] Zwingli, *Latin Works*, II, 130 f.

[2] Brunner, *Doctrine of God*, pp. 296, 321 ff.

[3] Zwingli, *Latin Works*, III, 64 f.

shadow or deprivation of good rather than a reality existing in its own right.[1] He argues from the assertion of Genesis that all that is, is good, to the quite different idea that all that _is_, is _God_. And with this we reach the point where a discussion of the goodness of God, as a _moral_ character of the deity, is transformed by the question which for Zwingli was apparently much more fundamental, that of His metaphysical nature.

The Being of God

In Zwingli more than in any other Reformer the doctrine of God holds an absolutely central place.[2] His view of deity, as we have already found, has strong affinities with that which entered into the Christian theological tradition from Hellenism. The similarity of Zwingli's God to the One of Neoplatonism which is both _Summum Bonum_ and _Summum Ens_ has been cogently argued by Brunner.[3] This doctrine is familiar in Christian thought through Augustine, whose Neoplatonic background is well-known.[4] On the other hand, there is much here

---

[1] Cf. the argument of the Neoplatonist Nebridius reproduced by Augustine, _The Confessions of St. Augustine_ (The Literary Guild of America, n.d.), Bk. VII, II, 3, pp. 122 f.

[2] Foster, _Zwingli_, p. 370.

[3] Brunner, _Doctrine of God_, pp. 321 ff.

[4] Cf. the experience at Ostia, _Confessions_, Bk. IX, X, 23, pp. 197 f.; William Pearson Tolley, _The Idea of God in the Philosophy of St. Augustine_ (New York City: Richard R. Smith, 1930), pp. 13 f. Zwingli was well acquainted with Patristic literature and undoubtedly knew Augustine. Cf. Jackson, p. 107, n. 1; pp. 121 f.

which is even more directly reminiscent of the Aristotelian theology of Scholasticism, particularly in Aquinas, for it was here above all that Being was the fundamental category. Neoplatonism tended to put its One beyond existence; but both Aquinas and Zwingli found their basic text in Exodus 3:14. Zwingli writes:

> "I AM THAT I AM." In these words God disclosed Himself wholly; for it is just as if He had said, "I am he who am of myself, who am by my own effort, who am absolute being, who 'am' par excellence." And this meaning He immediately brings out by adding, "This shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, He that is hath sent me unto you." By these words He indicated that He alone is the being (esse) of all things.[1]

A further illustration of Zwingli's kinship with Hellenistic thought is found in this same "Commentary on True and False Religion" where he says that God is "a sort of stuff, as it were, from which all things have being and motion and life."[2] Here is a reminiscence, apparently, of the quasi-materialistic Stoic pantheism which was progressively refined and personalized, to be sure, but of which his "saint" Seneca and other favorites of the humanists were heirs and in whom its influence persists.[3] God, then, is the Being which in turn gives being to all things.

> He took from Himself this existence which he gave to His works and creatures, everything that is, is in Him and

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, III, 62. Cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I. 2, 3; Gilson, God and Philosophy, pp. 40 ff.

[2] Latin Works, III, 66.

[3] Cf. Galen's account of Zeno: "Plato held that God was non-material. . .; Zeno that he was a bodily substance." And Diogenes Laertius: "Zeno says that the whole universe forms the substance of God." Quoted by Bevan, p. 1.

> through Him and a part of Him. . . .Outside of this infinite there can be no existence. For whatever such you grant, where this outside existence is, there the infinite will not be, and, therefore, it will not be infinite. And from this it follows that whatever is, is in it, nay, what is and exists comes from it, and since it does not come from it in the sense that its being and existence is different from its own, it is certain that as far as being and existence are concerned, there is nothing which is not of the Deity. For it is the being of all things.[1]

If, as were impossible, the deity did not exist, everything would simply collapse in a moment and be reduced to nothing.[2]

Since then, God is really all that is, or at least its immanent ground and true substance, He combines all possible perfections in Himself. Once again, the shortest way to the heart of the matter is Zwingli's own statement:

> If power and strength are good, our Divinity is supremely powerful, if truth is good, it is supremely true, and so on. Thus the supreme good is supreme and indeed unlimited power, is supremely true, that is, is truth in its essence, so that there is not anywhere power and strength, no truth, simplicity, genuineness, purity, which is not from this foundation of truth, nay, is not this very truth itself.[3]

To sum up, God is supreme power and might, supreme good, and that simplicity, purity, light, genuineness and unchangeableness which is essential truth.

Finally, all these excellences merge in one. There can be no conflict or discord among the divine endowments. God is "simple," to use the term of the traditional metaphysics of the time. All His attributes equally contribute to all He does, for they are all but humanly distinguished aspects of one simple and indivisible whole. The ascription

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 143.

[2] Ibid., pp. 146 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 132.

of a special work to one or another is simply for our benefit, that our thought of God may be clearer and our knowledge of His works more complete.[1]

God's Attributes as Creator

It might be thought that Zwingli's emphasis upon the immanence of God, amounting at times to a virtual pantheism, would make it difficult for him to give the doctrine of God as Creator its traditional importance. This is not the case, however. He not only expounds this idea with vigor, but he closely connects a number of the aspects of God's nature directly with His place as Creator.

Doctrine of creation.--In a most interesting passage in the sermon "On Providence" Zwingli appeals at length to classical sources, particularly to Seneca, for support for a doctrine of creation. This he can do because all sound doctrine comes "from one source, namely from the nature and character of the Supreme Deity. This source Plato also tasted, and Seneca drank from it." He quotes at length, therefore, from Seneca's sixty-fifth letter to Lucilius, which contains a somewhat confused account of the Platonic doctrine of ideas, mingled with Aristotle's outline of the four causes. "God has within Himself these patterns of all things and comprehends in His mind the harmonies and measures of the totality of things that are to be carried out."[2] That is, the Platonic

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 185 f.

[2] Ibid., p. 151.

"Ideas" are a plan in the mind of God, rather than constituting a realm over against Him by which He orders His work. Then five "causes" are outlined, as the basic creative factors: God, matter, the form or shape of the visible universe, the model, and the purpose of God.[1] That there is a rather confused overlapping here does not seem to bother Zwingli, any more than the apparent metaphysical pluralism of God, forms, matter, and world. For in fact he simply assimilates this passage to the other, where it is stated that the forms are in God, and to the Christian tradition and the Bible where the doctrine of creation ex nihilo, the sole ultimacy of God, is affirmed.

Matter is not assigned to God, like clay to a sculptor, as if it were self-existent and God only moulded it into the shape He desired. Rather, as both Seneca and the Scriptures affirm, this "matter," the "desolate waste" of Genesis,[2] and the "chaos" of the heathen poets, was first created out of nothing. Then, "the hand of God was laid upon His creation in activity and skill, and thence forward is constantly laid upon it, creating all things and governing them when created."[3] Furthermore, and very significantly, "man also was created from matter and is a type of the whole universe, so that as that is ruled and regulated by God, so is he by the soul, not by a soul that is different from God

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 152.

[2] Genesis 1:1, quoted in Hebrew by Zwingli.

[3] Latin Works, II, 154.

or exists of itself, but one which is subject to and dependent upon God, is inspired, fostered, ruled, and fed by God, consisting of the Spirit of God."[1]

Finally, what is the motive for creating since God in Himself seems to possess all possible perfections and to be free from any need which could be met by a world not simply identical with Himself? The answer is not, as one might suspect, that God must create, that the world is co-eternal with Him. Rather its motive is found in the goodness of God. By nature He is kind and bountiful, looking for no return nor for glory but simply desiring

> the profit of those to whom He gives, with only this one thing in view, that He may belong to those things which were made by Him; for He desires to impart Himself freely. For, as He is the fountain-source of all things (for no one before He existed had any claim to be born of Him), so also is He unceasingly bountiful to those whom He begot with this one purpose, that they might enjoy His bounty. In a word, this good differs from other things that seem good in this, that they do not spend themselves. . .gratuitously, being mean and poor; whereas this, on the contrary, neither would nor could be spent except gratuitously.[2]

Infinity and eternity.--It is specifically from the fact of God's creatorhood that Zwingli infers His infinity, although this would also seem to be implied by the fact that He possesses all Being. This is the argument:

> All the things that are are either created or uncreated. The one and only uncreated thing is God, for there can be but one uncreated thing. If there were several uncreated things, there would be several eternals, for the uncreated and the eternal are so closely allied that as one is so is also the other. . . .Now, since there can

---

[1] Ibid., 154, (italics ours). [2] Ibid., III, 70 f.

> be only one infinite (for as soon as we admit two infinite substances each becomes finite), it is certain that the one and only uncreated thing is God. On this depends also the origin, source and foundation of the first article of our faith. . ."I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth."[1]

Otherness.--In spite of the strongly immanent note in most of Zwingli's descriptions of God, he clings to the assertion that He entirely transcends the grasp of our thought.

> What God is, we have just as little knowledge of from ourselves as a beetle has of what man is. Nay, this infinite and eternal divine is much farther separated from man than man is from the beetle, because a comparison between any kinds of created things can more properly be made than between any created thing and the Creator, and all perishable things are nearer and more closely related to each other than to the eternal and unbounded divine, however much you may find in them a likeness and footprints, as they say, of that divine.[2]

It is difficult to assimilate this stress on the otherness of God to the statement we noted earlier about man's spirit "consisting of the Spirit of God" and with what Zwingli says about the nature of reason and its relation to the divine, to which we turn next. His meaning must be that we cannot grasp or comprehend so infinitely great a power and being, even though we live in Him and His life and mind dwell in us and His substance makes up ours. It is a gulf which the imagination cannot bridge, but not a metaphysical separation.

Divine Wisdom

The cause of the world, says Zwingli, quoting Seneca with approval, "is surely creative reason, that is, God."[3]

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 238; cf. 241.

[2] Ibid., III, 61.

[3] Ibid., II, 152.

Here is another striking reminiscence of Stoicism, one of whose great terms was spermatikos logos of which "creative reason" is a reasonably exact translation.[1] We have noted that the Platonic "Ideas" are in the mind of God.[2] And the parallel between human reason and the divine mind is explicitly drawn. First of all, man is the microcosm for which the world was made. "Man is. . .to the world what God is to man. God is the lord and director of the human mind; man is the lord of the world." The sun shines, the winds blow, the animals exist, the earth itself subsists, on his account.[3] Without man the whole great work of the universe would be in vain. And as the vegetation of the earth is fruitful on his behalf, so he is the precious harvest of the divine purpose. "He tarries a while in this world like the fruit on the trees, and as that, when ripe, is gathered and stored away, so he, after the vicissitudes of this world, is stored in the heavenly granary."[4]

In order, then, that man be a suitable lord of the world he must have something in him akin to the realm over

---

[1] Cf. Bevan, pp.3f., where Diogenes Laertius ascribes to Zeno the doctrine in these words: "God, Mind, Destiny, Zeus--it is One Thing which is called by these and by many other names. In the beginning He was by Himself, alone; then He turned His whole substance through air into water. And just as the seed is contained in the genital fluid, so God, as the Seminal Formula (spermatikos logos) of the kosmos, remains, such as He is, in the watery mass, modifying the stuff of it so that it yields to his working. . . .Then He generates."

[2] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 151.

[3] Ibid., p. 160. [4] Ibid., p. 232.

which he is set, and also some "surpassing endowment, by which he could conquer and break the rebellious spirit of things." Hence he was given a body, and even though it is the finest and loveliest of bodies it is still in sharp contrast to his nobler part. "For what differs more widely from the clearness and light of the mind and intelligence than the dull inactivity of the earth and the body?" Thus we have in man, as a dual being, the everlasting conflict of flesh against spirit. Man's

> mind is a clear, limpid stream, flowing forth from the Godhead itself. Hence it is so eager for truth and right and so devoted to them that if you could consider it apart from the dull mass of the body, as the angels are, you would detect nothing base, disturbing, or defiling in it. . . .The mind yearns for light, purity and goodness, inasmuch as its nature is light, its substance pure and devoted to the right, seeing that it derives its origin from the Godhead.[1]

It would be difficult to find a more enthusiastic assimilation of the human intellect to the divine reason; and in the comparison our understanding of Zwingli's doctrine of God is deepened. Yet we must carefully note that it is not affirmed that God is present and active only in the mind. Rather in the case of both body and mind "the strength of each is not its own but God's in it, who is the being, existence and power of all things." Thus it is that in their warfare, the flesh as well as the spirit both play their part by "His will and knowledge." "Whatever the flesh does, it

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 160 ff. Richardson, pp. 10 ff., points out the influence of this dualism on Zwingli's doctrine of the sacraments.

does of and through God."[1] Although wisdom is one of the chief attributes of God, and richly displayed in the order, variety and beauty of all his works,[2] yet we cannot simply identify Him with Reason. He is more, as we have seen; His is the total perfection of the infinite Being or substance which all the variety of His world exhibits.

Freedom of the Divine Will

"God had said to the man, 'The day thou eatest thou shalt die the death.'[3] Thus spake the true Zeus, whose orders all the things that are obey so implicitly that they would rather be destroyed than not fulfill them."[4] This striking comment introduces us to another aspect of Zwingli's doctrine of God, one which is in contrast with the primarily ontological and rational emphasis which has been predominant in our analysis so far. Will as well as Being is a significant component in the divine nature, and one which has considerable bearing on the question of His goodness.

We are never left in doubt by Zwingli on the score of the absolute freedom of God's will. We have spoken of the divine reason; but in fact the decision of God's will does not take account of circumstances or "the contingency of any creature," nor does it consider or wait for any event. God, "who from eternity to eternity surveys the universe with

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 171.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

[3] Genesis 2:17.

[4] *Latin Works*, II, 15.

a single, simple look, has no need of any reasoning process or of waiting for events; but being equally wise, prudent, good, etc., He freely determines and disposes of all things, for whatever is, is His."[1] The suggestion of arbitrariness here is amplified in a more forthright statement. Men are

> instruments, which God can use as He will more freely than the father of a family may drink water or pour it out upon the ground. And although He impels men to some deed which is wickedness unto the instrument that performs it, yet it is not such unto Himself. For His movements are free. Nor does He do wrong to the instrument, since all things are His more than any artisan's tools are his own. . . .He instigates the robber, therefore, to kill even the innocent and those unprepared for death.[2]

This last is not quite as horrifying as it sounds, for Zwingli goes on to point out that in God's providence our souls are always in His hands and for an innocent man death is really passage to life.[3] He is not really saying here that God is absolutely free to do wrong, but only to dispose of His world freely according to His goodness and wisdom.

God and law.--Zwingli seems to come even nearer to ascribing an amoral arbitrariness to God in his treatment of the relation of God to moral law. To be sure, this is not apparent in his fundamental definitions of the law which reveal a point of view quite different from that of Luther. Of the latter he says, critically,

> Some persons of the first importance, as they think, have spoken without sufficient circumspection about the law in saying that the law is only to terrify, damn, and deliver over to torments. In reality, the law does not

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 38. [2] Ibid., pp. 182 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 183.

> do that at all, but, on the contrary, sets forth the will and nature of the Deity.[1]

Elsewhere he calls the law "the eternal will of God." To be sure, we pick and choose among the commandments of the Scriptures, but this is on the principle that the heart of this "permanent will of God" is "Love thy neighbor as thyself." All else is to be tested by this touchstone. Christ is love, as we know from the Scriptural saying, "God is love"; and those who serve under Christ must do what love orders and are not bound by anything else.[2] The law, then, only sets forth the nature of God, which is thoroughly good. It is simply the "divine order, expressing His nature and will." Thus, "when we hear the law, we know what God wills and that He is Himself of the nature of that which He shows us." Even in the simple injunctions of the Decalogue we learn that God hates violence, injustice, and wrong. For--and this is important--"unless His nature were such, He would expose Himself to the charge of duplicity in ordering one thing and wishing another." Hence we conclude that the law "is light, it is the mind, intelligence, and will of God."[3]

So far so good. But now Zwingli turns the whole argument in a strange direction by the use of the principle that sin or wrong is entirely defined by reference to law. "Where there is no law, there is no transgression."[4] But this means that God cannot do wrong, for He is not under law.

---

[1] Zwingli, *Latin Works*, II, 166. [2] *Ibid.*, III, 137 f.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 166 ff. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

This seems reasonable, for the law has been defined as the will and nature of God and it would be readily granted that the character of the perfectly good God must be the standard of all good. But Zwingli interprets this to mean that no matter what God might do it would not be wrong. "He is above the law, we are under the law"; He is the love which is commanded of us. [1] Thus, although God commands us not to kill, "when He slays according to His will, He is no murderer, because He is not under the law, and not being under the law He does not sin."

But someone immediately objects that although God may not technically "sin" in contravening His own law, yet He acts inconsistently with His nature and contradicts Himself. To this Zwingli has more than one answer. First, killing is murder only when it occurs under the influence of some wrong motive such as anger, hate, and greed. But since God obviously cannot be moved by any such unworthy motive, He cannot commit murder. Second, killing *per se* is not forbidden by the law, as is shown by the right of a judge to sentence someone to death with judicial impartiality. But God is by definition the very essence of justice, and moreover possessed of absolute rights over His universe, so obviously He cannot slay in any way which could be accounted murder.[2] This is a little like the ancient legal maxim, "The king can do no wrong." It is capable of cutting both

---

[1] Zwingli, *Latin Works*, II, 169.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 169 f.

ways; if the command is wrong, then the king cannot have commanded it, even if the words came from his own mouth. God's sovereignty and justice are joined here only by the tacit assumption of a perfectly wise providence which makes all things, even apparently bad ones, work together for a greater good. This is the argument which we must examine in detail in the next section.

Although killing can be interpreted as morally neutral, the deliberate instigation of sin, as such, would seem to present a more difficult problem. Yet Zwingli is quite prepared to admit, as he must on the premises he has laid down for the nature and sovereignty of God, that God does make angels and men sin.[1] And he stoutly maintains that this does not make God do wrong.

> What God brings about through man's agency is imputed a crime to man, but not also to God. For the one is under the law, the other is the free spirit and mind of the law. And when we say that Divine Providence did this or that wrong which one man or another has perpetrated, we speak improperly. For in so far as God does it, it is not sin, because it is not against the law. . . .One and the same deed, therefore, adultery, namely, or murder, as far as it concerns God as author, mover and instigator, is an act, not a crime, as far as it concerns man, is a crime and wickedness.[2]

When God makes David commit adultery it is no more a sin to God than when He moves a bull to impregnate a whole herd. When He slays a man by the hand of a robber or an unjust judge, He does no more sin than when He kills a wolf by means of a wolf.[3]

The act, we may again agree, in all such cases may be

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 203 f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 181 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 182.

morally neutral so far as God is concerned. But what about the sin in the agent by whom God does the act, which is certainly not morally neutral for that agent? To this Zwingli gives no direct answer. Rather, he flies away to the principle that things which we think pernicious are on another side profitable. In other words, even sin, not just its expression but the thing itself, must be considered to be "good," at least in the sense of being indispensable to the best possible world under God's providential arrangement.[1] There is nothing further to argue on this level, then. By definition God can do no wrong, although He does all the "wrong" things that happen in the world. This is because His intent is always perfect, and because being by nature not only the giver and examplar of the moral law He cannot be bound by it; but rather He simply exemplifies it, necessarily, in all he does. For the further examination of these puzzling ideas we must turn to the topic of God's providential government, by which Zwingli essays to justify the ways of God to man.

Divine Providence

No theologian has ever given a more complete and unequivocal statement of the absolute providence of God than Zwingli does, particularly in the sermon "On the Providence of God," but also elsewhere. He defines it in one place as "the enduring and unchangeable rule over and direction of all things in the universe."[2] But this sounds too voluntaristic

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 178 ff. [2] Ibid., p. 136.

to be a quite adequate expression of Zwingli's idea. For it is not just that God's will moves all things, but that God is himself the substance of all things and that in a sense His government of the world is simply His own self-government. He acts upon the world, not like an agent manipulating an object, but like a man moving his arm. It is an ontological matter as much as a matter of will, as this statement brings out:

> God not only is a sort of stuff, as it were, from which all things have being and motion and life, but is at the same time such wisdom, knowledge, and foresight that nothing is hidden from Him, nothing unknown to Him, nothing beyond His reach, nothing disobedient to Him. Hence not even the mosquito has its sharp sting and musical hum without God's wisdom, knowledge, and foresight. . . . For that thing which is God could not be the supreme good unless it were at the same time supreme wisdom and foresight. . . .If any thing were regulated by other providence than His, then divine providence would be inert and defective in this particular, and accordingly would not be supreme nor absolute; for in as far as it failed to act it would be imperfect. But. . .nothing is so at variance with His nature and character as imperfection. For that which is imperfect is not God: and, on the other hand, that alone is God which is perfect, i.e., absolute, and which lacks nothing, but has everything that befits the supreme good.[1]

There is little need to elaborate this view which is perfectly straightforward and uncomplicated as he expounds it in a number of places. God is Sole Cause of literally all things and events. "Secondary causes are not properly called causes." They are simply instruments of the divine working. If He chose He could, by his "very life and presence" do all without any of these means.[2] Once again, "all power is the power of the Deity,--for there is nothing which is not from

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, III, 66 f.

[2] Ibid., II, 138, 155, 157.

that, in that, and through that Deity, nay is not a part of Himself."[1] Specifically, free will--as well as human merit--is completely excluded.[2]

It is not enough, however, simply to note that Zwingli affirms the sole causality of God, thus saddling Him with responsibility for all the apparent evil of the world. We must ask if he justifies that total power. Certainly he attempts to do so. It is no part of his intent to give us a doctrine of an immoral or even amoral deity. This absolute control is obviously for the best, he argues, for if anything moves freely beyond God's control then "intelligence, reason, thought will count for nothing." Everything will obey simply chance or fortune, and ultimately there will be no real deity--the worst imaginable condition of affairs.[3] Happily the situation is quite different. God does rule, and that rule to Zwingli is "so conscientious, holy, acceptable, and delightful that everybody willingly obeys it, who has gotten even the merest taste of a knowledge of it."[4]

The Problem of Evil

To show that the rule of God's absolute providence is in fact so delightful and good Zwingli must offer some answer as to why so much apparent evil appears in a world it completely dominates. This he boldly undertakes to do.

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 137 f.

[2] Ibid., III, 273; II, 189.

[3] Ibid., p. 158. [4] Ibid., p. 136.

First of all, he addresses the primary question as to the introduction of evil and sin into the world in the first place. Why did God create man an unhappy mixture of flesh and spirit who, as we have seen, must continually be at war with himself? And second, why should the spirit be punished everlastingly for being overcome by the flesh when God made man thus and is Himself the active power in the flesh?

In response to the first question, Zwingli appeals to the words of Paul and asks if the potter has not the right to make His vessels as He will. "It so pleased Him to whom whatever pleases Him is lawful." But is this an answer? As a kind of recognition that it is not, Zwingli completes the sentence: ". . .and whom nothing pleases which is not good and holy and just."[1] We are back on familiar ground: God is good, by definition! But part of the "definition" is that His wisdom and skill and goodness are supreme and trustworthy.

As to the question in regard to the punishment of the soul for being overcome by the flesh with which God burdens it, Zwingli affirms that it is part of the glory of man "that he aspires to the divine and makes use of the body."[2] Furthermore, the errors into which men fall serve to remind us of our status, and save us from forgetting that unchangeability and infallibility are God's alone.[3] More important, if man were not put under the law--by which sin comes--he would

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 163 f.

[2] Ibid., p. 172. [3] Ibid., p. 173.

not know the will of God, for the law is His will; and "that which knoweth not the will of God was not created for His friendship and companionship."[1]

Zwingli pursues the further question, as to why the Fall of man was permitted--or why God created man knowing that he would fall--with relentless and confident logic. Since God created out of sheer goodness (as we have seen), the creation of man must be recognized to be good. But since the goodness of God

> contains in itself justice and righteousness as well as kindness and mercy, it was necessary that when the intellects of both angels and men were to be created they should be so made as to recognize God's righteousness just as much as His kindness. But how can righteousness be recognized if there be not also unrighteousness? So kindness and gentleness cannot be known unless there be violence and fierceness. For what good is cannot be known unless there be evil, by comparing and judging which one gets the notion of the good.[2]

Now obviously God cannot Himself display any unrighteousness since He is necessarily perfectly good. Thus He produced an example of unrighteousness by means of a created being! And here Zwingli is rigorously faithful to his basic doctrinal position: "He produced an example of unrighteousness by means of a created being, not as if the created being produced it of itself, since it has neither being, life, nor activity without the Deity, but the Deity is Himself the author of that which to us is unrighteousness, though not in the least so to Him."[3] In other words, to display perfect goodness God

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 173 f.

[2] Ibid., p. 175.

[3] Ibid., p. 176.

created a being to do evil, and acted upon it so compulsively that He was the actual Author and Cause of its evildoing and then in perfect rectitude condemned the creature to infinite punishment!

This dogged insistence that the evil of the creature displays the righteousness of God is extended by Zwingli to the whole animal realm. "The tiger and crocodile proclaim the majesty of God just as much as do the ox and the sheep. For as the one pair exhibits His goodness so the other shows His righteousness." The former, that is, behave so badly that the most wicked of men abominate them. But by this very condemnation these men condemn themselves for acting like these animals. Thus all creatures belonging to both classes--those which profit and those which injure man--equally extol the righteousness and kindness of God.[1] It is interesting that after all this dialectical ingenuity Zwingli returns in a later paragraph to an appeal to the depths of the divine wisdom. This is safer ground!

> We ought not to put to this wisdom the question why it made men so, or any other thing whatever, but we ought to reflect that since man has been made so, he must have been made so with perfect wisdom, just as we do not ask of the stars why they were so made or why they keep their particular course, but when by long observation we have discovered their limits and power we bear witness that they were wisely made. So to take God to task on account of the creation of man is arrogant, impudent and rebellious, but to be moved by the study of man to wondering appreciation of the divine wisdom is pious and holy.[2]

Using another approach Zwingli takes the case of an innocent man killed by a robber. God did the killing, of course, by means of the murderer. But by killing the right-

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 177 f. [2] Ibid., p. 179.

eous victim He only provided him with a quick passage to heaven. And while instigating the robber to murder He insured that the criminal would be brought before a judge whom He would goad through conscience to convict and condemn the former to death on a cross. Thus an example was made of him "and the wicked mind that had been hidden. . .revealed to the world."

> In short, God instigated the killing, but He instigates the judge just as much to sacrifice the slayer to justice. And He who instigates, does it without any suspicion of crime. For He is not under the law. But he who is instigated is so far from being free from guilt, on the contrary he does practically nothing without being bespattered with stains, because he is under the law.[1]

It is perhaps best to draw the veil of silence at this point, except for the final reminder that Zwingli is obviously trying to show how a God defined in terms of a metaphysical perfection which includes omnicausality is as morally good as Zwingli is convinced is the case.

Election

Election was as central for Zwingli's piety as was the idea of providence in his view of God's nature and activity. What faith was to Luther, God's free and unconditional election was for Zwingli. He defines it succinctly: election "is the free disposition of the divine will in regard to those that are to be blessed." It has nothing to do with our arranging or disposing, with our faith or our works, but only with the free determination of the divine majesty.[2] What about those who are not chosen?

---

[1] Zwingli, *Latin Works*, II, 183. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 184.

> Election is attributed to those only who are to be blessed, but those who are to be damned are not said to be elected, though the Divine Will makes a disposition with regard to them also, but He rejects, expels and repudiates them, that they may become examples of His righteousness. Election, therefore, is the free but not blind disposition of the Divine Will. . .applying to the blessed, not the damned.[1]

This double decree, of reprobation as well as election sounds grim, but Zwingli wrings the most favorable possible implications out of it. By making salvation dependent on no sacrament, for example, nor even on a connection with the visible church but only upon the free choice of God, he finds it possible to hope for a happy destiny for many whom others would place beyond the pale. Since "everlasting life belongs to those who have been elected to it by God, why do we form harsh judgments about any, since God's election is hidden from us?"[2]

But are there no grounds upon which we can base at least a reasonable assurance of belonging to the elect? Zwingli suggests more than one. To begin with, "there are none of whose election we are more sure than of those children who are taken away young." His logic is persuasive: these children, especially when born of believing parents, cannot bear any blemish before they even have knowledge of the law. And original sin has been atoned for by Christ; hence "dying is just as much a sign of election in them as faith is in grown people." On the other hand, Zwingli argues, "those who are unregenerate and have been rejected of God do not lie in

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 186 f. [2] Ibid., pp. 10 f.

this condition of innocence, but are preserved by Divine Providence that their rejection may be made known by their wicked life."[1] Is this the origin of the saying that "the good die young"! At any rate, the thought is comforting and brings to bereaved parents some reassurance of the goodness of God.

Beyond an early death the chief ground for assurance is faith. "Faith is the sign of the election by which we obtain real blessedness. If election as a blossom had not preceded, faith would never have followed."[2] Those who have faith are therefore justified--but not, as Luther sometimes unguardedly suggested, as if faith were "a work to which forgiveness of sins was due as a reward." Rather, those who have faith know their sins blotted out and then nothing is to prevent their entering upon a blessed heritage. There are passages here and there which sound as if faith itself did the work. When

> the mind of man has been so taught by God to know that His Son was made an offering for our sins, it is so charmed by the taste of the Divine Goodness as to trust in that only and alone which has wiped away the poisonous effect of sin. Finally it becomes so devoted to God only and alone that it is just as ready to die as to live for him. Then there is nothing which can damn the soul of man.[3]

This must, however, be regarded as a slightly ambiguous foot-note to the general doctrine that election alone and nothing else matters.

Just as faith is a sure sign of election, so deliberate unbelief is a mark of reprobation. About those who

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 207. [2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] Ibid., p. 198.

have not heard or understood it we can venture no opinion. And even sinfulness cannot be taken as a sure sign of prospective damnation since so many of the worst men have ultimately returned to the right way. As for the heathen, "nothing prevents God from choosing from among the heathen men to revere Him, to honor Him, and after death to be united to Him. For His election is free."[1]

Conclusion

Zwingli is supremely confident of the goodness of of God. He seems to mean by that term most fundamentally a kind of metaphysical "perfection" which embraces and sums up all attributes of excellence, including moral goodness. Kindness and mercy along with justice and equity are specifically assigned to God. On the other hand, Zwingli unhesitatingly ascribes to God immanent, irresistible, and total action in all events including those characterized by evil and by sin. How carefully he tries to reconcile these assertions we have seen. The bankruptcy of his logic is only as apparent as his conviction that somehow metaphysical and moral perfection unite in complete harmony in the nature of God. He was apparently incapable of entertaining the idea that they might be separable. But, if unbeguiled by his dialectic, we insist upon asking which is primary, the answer seems inevitable that metaphysical "goodness" or perfection, the possession of all positive attributes of being, power, and knowledge, was really fundamental.

---

[1] Zwingli, Latin Works, II, 199 ff.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN CALVIN

Page

Concerning the Man 145

    The General Character of His Thought 146
    Calvin's Conversion 150

Justification by Faith 154

Predestination 160

    Election 163
    Reprobation 168
    Providence 172
        Human free-will
        Reasons for Calvin's doctrine of Providence
    Implications of Predestination 178

God and Moral Order 179

    God and Moral Norms 180
        Divine justice
        Divine freedom
        God and law
    God and Evil 185

The Depth of Divine Majesty 188

    God's Transcendent Greatness 188
    Depth of the Divine Mystery 190
        A double aspect in God
        Natural law

The Divine Goodness 193

    God in Christ 195

Conclusions 195

CHAPTER IV

JOHN CALVIN

Concerning the Man

No Protestant theologian has left more impressive monuments than John Calvin. The polity and doctrine of the great group of Reformed and Presbyterian churches is one such monument. In another way, more indirect but nonetheless real, the economic[1] and political order of Western democracy[2] represent his lengthened shadow. And on the shelves of countless libraries and of studious parsons the world around the literary monuments of Calvin are to be found, perhaps the most impressively systematic corpus of theological writing which reformed Christianity has yet produced.[3] Such is

---

[1] The precise nature of the Calvinist contribution to the rise of capitalism is still much discussed; but that there was a notable contribution of some kind seems assured as a result of the work of Max Weber, reflected in the discussions by R. H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (New York: The New American Library, 1950), pp. 91 ff., 165 ff., and Troeltsch, II, 641 ff.

[2] Cf. James Hastings Nichols, Democracy and the Churches (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1941), chaps. i, iii, v; and Troeltsch, II, 617 ff.

[3] The chief works in English translation are the Institutes, a work translated from the Latin edition of 1559 and collated with the author's last French edition of 1560; the Commentaries on the books of the Bible, (45 vols., Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1843-1860); the brief but very important Instruction in Faith, (1537), trans. with foreword and notes by Paul T. Fuhrmann (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949). Also used here have been Jules Bonnet (ed.),

the stature of this man who lived and wrote to glorify God. Our question here is how well he succeeded in that aim. Or rather, what kind of glory was it which he succeeded in expressing in the great books which enshrine his thought?

The General Character of His Thought

Without pausing for a lengthy characterization of so well-known and much-read a theologian as Calvin, it still seems wise to indicate at the outset the general character of his thought. Only by understanding something of his goals and of the way his mind worked are we able to frame a coherent concept of his view of God; for when probed deeply the writings which appear so systematic and which exhibit so much felicity of style are found to abound in difficulties, not to say contradictions. These fall into some kind of order, however, when understood from the standpoint of Calvin's primary interests. Above all those interests were practical. He was not first of all a thinker nor a scholar, not fundamentally a prophet nor a saint. He was, in the phrase of Williston Walker, "The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism."[1] He was concerned to defend the Reformation against its Roman enemies and to guard it against its sectarian subverters, to build its structures of doctrine and of organization so strong

---

Letters of John Calvin (4 vols.; Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1858), and *A Selection of the Most Celebrated Sermons of John Calvin* (Philadelphia: Desilver, Thomas & Co., 1835).

[1] Walker, *John Calvin, The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism*; cf. James MacKinnon, *Calvin and the Reformation* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936), p.250.

and solid that neither weakness within nor pressures from without could crack them.

Under the control of this primarily practical purpose Calvin's doctrine had two characteristic emphases or foci. They are suggested in his "Reply to Sadoleto," where he criticizes the Roman church on two main counts: it obscures the goodness and mercy of Christ as the only ground of salvation and thus hinders men from seeing the glory of the goodness and justice of God; and by leading men to concentrate their attention on their own good works it has caused the virtual disappearance of "that confident hope of salvation which is both enjoined by thy Word, and founded upon it."[1] In other words, Calvin was concerned that all piety be focussed upon God, His Will, His act, His glory and goodness, rather than upon any human devices or abilities; and he was concerned that certainty of salvation be afforded the sincere Christian believer. The same two concerns are stated repeatedly in the Institutes: "Two things demand our consideration--that the honour, which belongs to Christ, should be preserved to him entire and undiminished; and that consciences assured of the pardon of their sins, should have peace with God."[2] Again, "here are two things to which we must always be particularly

---

[1] This portion of the "Reply" is found in Harry Emerson Fosdick (ed.), Great Voices of the Reformation (New York: Random House, 1952), pp. 210f., reprinted from John Calvin, Tracts Relating to the Reformation, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: 1844), Vol. I.

[2] Calvin, Institutes, I, 711. (All references to the Institutes are to volume and page unless otherwise noted.)

attentive, to maintain the glory of the Lord unimpaired and undiminished, and to preserve in our own consciences a placid composure and serene tranquillity with regard to the Divine judgment."[1] The heading for Chapter xv of Book III of the *Institutes* reads, "*Boasting of the Merit of Works, Equally Subversive of God's Glory in the Gift of Righteousness, and of the Certainty of Salvation.*"[2]

The controlling importance of these two concerns is exhibited both in the method by which Calvin developed his doctrine and in its content. Certainty of salvation requires certainty of belief, precision as to the ground of authority, exact specification of the conditions and character of the Christian's hope. This led, for example, to Calvin's emphasis on the principle of Biblical authority. If the Bible could be seen as an absolute and perfect law for the church and a compendium of all sound doctrine--perhaps even of all valid knowledge[3]--then the erstwhile lawyer would have a weapon with which all opposition and all doubts could be quelled.[4]

---

[1] Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 832.

[2] *Ibid.*, II, 25; cf. A Mitchell Hunter, *The Teaching of Calvin, A Modern Interpretation* (2d ed.; London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1950), p. 102, n. 55.

[3] *Ibid.*, II, 173: "The Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing necessary and useful to be known is omitted, so nothing is taught which it is not beneficial to know."

[4] Cf. Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin, The Man and His Ethics* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931), p. 5. In conversation Dr. Harkness has emphasized her impression that Calvin's legal training was of very great significance for the development of his career and his thought.

His theological method, then, was direct, logical, functional; it was to expound the Scriptures[1] so as to include all necessary truth and to exclude all that was dubious, speculative, mystical, or troubling to faith.[2] Consequently, when the Scriptures failed to answer a question it was simply set aside as unanswerable--referred to the unsearchable depths of divine wisdom and majesty. This same interest in practical religious certainty meant that Calvin would naturally emphasize those doctrines which best sustained it. Notable among these would be justification by faith alone and the unconditional election and perseverance of the saints.

With this concern for practical religious assurance and certainty Calvin's interest in exalting the sovereignty and power of God worked in complete accord. It seems doubtful if this interest sprang exclusively from a personal religious apprehension of the divine majesty. To be sure, Calvin's piety was deep and true; of that there can be no doubt.[3] Nevertheless, in comparison with the stormy and overwhelming impact of His majesty upon Luther, the deity seems to have

---

[1] Cf. Calvin's Institutes, I, 18: "Now, my design in this work has been to prepare and qualify students of theology for the reading of the divine word."

[2] In discussing Calvin's attitude toward reason we shall see much evidence on this score. Hunter emphasizes this characteristic of Calvin's method; cf. pp. 36, 40 f., 46 ff.

[3] Hunter, pp. 36f., points out that it is best evidenced in the Commentaries; these "were in some wise the tale of the great things the Lord had done for him. Spiritual experience gave vision to book-learning, and the mind that thought and the hand that wrote were controlled by a soul that dwelt amongst the things which angels would fain look into."

touched Calvin's spirit with a fairly light hand.[1] This question is further illuminated by a consideration of Calvin's conversion.

Calvin's Conversion

The remarkable personal reserve which characterizes Calvin's writing is broken for an instant as he speaks of the experience which led him to join the Reformation movement:[2] "Since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame."[3] To this directly autobiographical note, we may add a few lines from the "Reply to Sadoleto" which are generally considered to represent at least in part Calvin's own confession:

> When, however, I had performed all these things [i.e., had sought forgiveness for sin in accordance with the usages of the Roman church], though I had some intervals of quiet, I was still far off from true peace of conscience; for, whenever I descended into myself, or raised my mind to Thee, extreme terror seized me--

---

[1] Compare Luther's experience at his first celebration of the mass with Calvin's apparently cool acceptance of the fact of his own father's excommunication! Bainton, p. 41; Walker, pp. 46, 52 f.

[2] Troeltsch, II, 589, comments on the "amazing objectivity and personal reserve" of the Calvin correspondence. His characterization of the Calvinist temperament seems entirely applicable to Calvin himself: "In its refusal to expand on the emotional side, and in its habit of placing confidence in God in the foreground and all human relations in the background, in going out of itself it always directs its attention toward concrete aims and purposes."

[3] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, trans. James Anderson (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), I, xl.

> terror which no expiations or satisfactions could cure. And the more closely I examined myself, the sharper the stings with which my conscience was pricked. . . .Lo, a very different form of doctrine started up, not one which led us away from the Christian profession, but one which brought it back to its original fountain-head, and, as it were, clearing away the dross, restored it to its original purity.[1]

The precise meaning of these references, valuable as they are, has exercised the minds of many scholars. Just what happened in Calvin's mind and heart at this "sudden" event is extraordinarily difficult to make out.[2] Even its date is hard to fix within a period of six months or more.[3] A great deal of evidence might be summarized in the following assertions about the background for this event, the importance of which is underlined by the fact that Calvin's mind matured early and that he fastened from the very beginning upon the few great ideas which were to dominate all his thinking:[4]

---

[1] Quoted by Walker, pp. 74 f.

[2] Much of this discussion is summarized by Walker, pp. 80 ff.; and by Wendel, pp. 20 ff.

[3] The account given by Calvin's friend and colleague, Theodore Beza, in his The Life of John Calvin, trans. Francis Sibson (Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1836), pp. 4 ff., makes it occur sometime early in 1533; but his assumption that Calvin wrote the rectoral address delivered by his friend Cop on Nov. 1, 1533, is now generally rejected. Walker, pp. 80-97, and Wendel, pp. 20-24, have summaries of the research lavished upon the question. Georgia Harkness, Calvin, p. 6, makes it between April, 1532 and November, 1533; John T. McNeill, Books of Faith and Power (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), p. 31, in April, 1534. Since he did not resign his ecclesiastical benefices at Noyon until May, 1534, it seems unlikely that the conversion occurred much earlier; cf. Wendel, pp. 22 f.

[4] Practically all the Calvin scholars agree on this; and indeed the continuity of thought in the many successive

Calvin's family background was one in which the church could be thought of as a career for future advantage, to be dropped when the promise of law seemed greater,[1] and in which the terrors of priestly ban had little weight.[2] He shared the humanistic scorn of popish mummery, as well as that humanistic zeal for looking back to the origins of a movement to discover its true norm which led to great emphasis upon the Bible as the documentary source for Christianity. The young lawyer saw in the Bible also the divine law by which church and faith were to be regulated. And there was the impact of enthusiastic Lutheran teaching by friends and preceptors while he was still young and his mind relatively pliable.[3] Furthermore, that teaching struck a mind more than ordinarily sensitive to religion, and perhaps genuinely troubled with pains of conscience.[4] A conviction of the majesty and active providence of God was undoubtedly nurtured not only by his Scotist philosophical training but by

---

editions of the Institutes, published over a period of twenty-five years, gives evidence of it. MacKinnon says Calvin had the "dogmatic faculty--the faculty of swift and intense conviction, which is impervious to change or compromise in the light of further experience or increasing knowledge. . . .For him truth is not a growth. . . .It is an intuition that abides and changes not. There is only elaboration, not essential development"; op. cit., p. 215. Cf. Wendel, p. 17; Hunter, pp. 20, 36.

[1] Walker, pp. 44 f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 45 f.

[3] Ibid., pp. 39, 49, 79 f.

[4] We cannot entirely discount the "Sadoleto" references to conscience; even though in his later career Calvin exhibited a singular assurance of rectitude under almost all circumstances.

the fresh impact of the Bible and even by his humanistic studies.[1] His new interest in the Bible and his response to its power must have deepened both his sense of sin and his will to strike out boldly in following God's will for the reform of His church.[2]

All these add up to the conclusion that Calvin's conversion centered in a discovery of the intellectual, practical, and religious superiority of an essentially Lutheran faith centering in justification by grace through faith alone, validated by the Bible and issuing in the cleansing of the church from all the legalistic encumbrances which had obstructed religious assurance and obscured the centrality of God's grace, power, and glory. Some of the ways in which Calvin's primarily practical bent naturally led to characteristic modifications and exaggerations of certain elements in the Lutheran position have just been pointed out.[3] His is a doctrine centered in the glory of

---

[1] Cf. the reference in his Seneca to the all-ordaining power of God; Wendel, p. 14.

[2] Cf. Calvin, Institutes, I, 94; Wendel, p. 18.

[3] Evidence that Calvin's doctrine must be understood from the standpoint of its source in Lutheran insights is abundant. Calvin testified to his debt to Luther; Schaff, Creeds, I, 260 f., n.1. His reference in the "Reply to Sadoleto" to a "new doctrine" which influenced him must indicate Lutheran teaching; Walker, p. 75. Troeltsch, II, 576 ff., states the relationship in strong terms. Wendel, pp. 95 ff., assembles a large amount of specific evidence about their relationship, especially at the beginning of Calvin's career, while pointing out the ways in which Calvin's thought later diverged from Luther's. The spirit and organization of Calvin's summary of his first edition of the Institutes, the Instruction in Faith of 1537, is strikingly similar to characteristic expressions of Luther. Brun-

God and developed with systematic skill to serve the practical ends of proclamation and instruction. Its aim was the edification of believers, particularly in respect to their assurance of salvation. The effect of these controlling principles we must now attempt to trace insofar as they bear upon the moral goodness of God.

Justification by Faith

It is natural to begin with this doctrine, for that is where Calvin began: with Luther's primary affirmation. Furthermore, the beginnings of indigenous Reformation thought in France, where Calvin's mind was formed, strike this same note, notably in the writings of Lefèvre.[1] This was the heart of the Protestant challenge to Rome, the challenge of which Calvin became the chief exponent and champion. Calvin explicitly assigned this doctrine a position of the highest importance: "They who believe themselves to be possessed of no power to justify themselves, believe what is principally necessary to be known in order to salvation."[2] It summed up that double emphasis which marked all of Calvin's doctrine: the glory of God, and the assurance of the believer.

---

ner, Doctrine of God, p. 95, calls the Instruction "a small handbook on the Luther-Catechism." Mackinnon, pp. 215 f., also emphasizes that Calvin derived his basic doctrines from Luther. The influence of Martin Bucer of Strasbourg was also a considerable one; cf. Calvin, Commentary on Psalms, I, xxxv; but his thought was, of course, essentially of the general Lutheran type. See also the valuable discussion by Wendel of Bucer's influence, pp. 100 ff. Melanchthon's relations with Calvin continued cordial over many years in spite of differences over predestination; Wendel, pp. 98 f.

[1] Walker, p. 10.

[2] Calvin, Institutes, I, 339.

The primary implication of justification on the basis of faith alone is certainly the mercy and kindness of God. Thus Calvin expatiates upon "the free goodness of the Father, with which he embraces us in Christ, when he invests us with the righteousness of Christ."[1] In a more philosophical mood he analyzes the whole matter of justification in terms of the traditional four causes. Thus the "efficient cause of eternal life being procured for us, was the mercy of our heavenly Father, and his gratuitous love towards us." The "material cause is Christ and his obedience, by which he obtained a righteousness for us." Faith is the formal and instrumental cause; and the final cause is "the demonstration of the Divine righteousness, and the praise of the Divine goodness."[2] Here are several points, however, which lead us beyond a simple recognition of divine goodness.

One is that although justification is from the goodness of God it is also for the praise of that goodness. The end of the whole is not primarily the redemption of men, as such, but the display of the divine attributes. A second point is the suggestion that God's love did not operate entirely freely but had to come to terms with a norm of justice before forgiveness could be extended. This involves Calvin's characteristic emphasis upon the satisfaction theory of the atonement. Sometimes Calvin uses personalistic language of divine wrath: "God, in a certain ineffable manner, at the

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 15.

[2] Ibid., pp. 19 f.

same time that he loved us, was nevertheless angry with us, till he was reconciled in Christ."[1] But more characteristically he speaks in terms of the norm of justice to which God's mercy must conform. In the same passage from which the above is drawn Calvin adds, "Since God is the fountain of all righteousness, he must necessarily be the enemy and judge of every sinner."[2] Here the norm is, so to speak, internal to God as the source of all right; yet it constrains Him. To the same effect Calvin speaks of Christ paying "the price of satisfaction to the justice of God."[3] In the earlier Instruction in Faith it is said that Christ "was afflicted by God and that he has felt and endured the horrible rigor of his judgment in order to shield us from his wrath and to satisfy his justice for us."[4]

To the imagery of wrath overcome and justice satisfied Calvin adds an interesting new dimension in the repeated suggestion that God sees "us and all our actions in Christ."[5] Here we are led to the thought of the actual union of believers with Christ, to our being "buried in the purity of Christ," so that "our persons appear righteous before God, because our iniquities are covered by his righteousness."[6] Calvin goes even farther and says that

> God accepts and loves his children, in whom he beholds the marks and lineaments of his own countenance; for we have elsewhere shown that regeneration is a reparation

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 580.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 508.

[4] Instruction in Faith, p. 49.

[5] Calvin, Institutes, II, 52.

[6] Ibid.

> of the Divine image in us. Wherever the Lord contemplates his own likeness, he justly both loves and honours it.[1]

Finally, there are suggestions of a "classic" theory of the atonement. Speaking of the Redeemer, the God-man, Calvin says,

> It was his office to swallow up death. . . .to overcome sin. . . .to put to flight the powers of the world and of the air. . . .Now, who possesses life or righteousness or the empire and power of heaven, but God alone? Therefore the most merciful God, when he determined on our redemption, became himself our Redeemer in the person of his only begotten Son![2]

In summary, these varying shades of expression all speak of the mercy of God, His conformity to a norm of justice within Himself, His self-giving for the sake of unworthy man. They also suggest His hatred of these sinful men, and describe His chief motives in terms of His love for Himself and His desire to display His goodness. Nevertheless, Calvin is insistent that there be no question of opposing a loving Christ who wins our forgiveness through his merits, to a God who is wrath and justice alone. Rather, "we see that the love of God holds the first place, as the supreme and original cause," while the merit of Christ "is subservient to the mercy of God."[3]

There is, finally, another problem concealed in the suggestion noted earlier that faith is the "formal and instrumental cause" of salvation.[4] This, of course, corresponds to the central word of Luther, sola fide. But as Luther did

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 46.

[2] Ibid., I, 508.

[3] Ibid., I, 579.

[4] Ibid., II, 19.

not clearly see, this idea is fundamentally ambiguous as to the role assigned to the divine initiative. Luther believed completely, no doubt, in the divine initiative; not only sola fide but also sola gratia. And in the face of the Roman system of works the two phrases must have seemed to him practically synonymous. As against trust in masses, relics, Aves, pilgrimages, and indulgences, to say that one is justified by faith alone does seem to ascribe all initiative and efficacy to the grace of God, to make man purely receptive and passive.

Yet this is not quite the case. There is an indubitable element of volition involved in the exercise of faith. It is an act of faith to believe that God freely forgives. And when the achievement of faith is followed by peace and the assurance of salvation it is almost inevitable that faith should become a sort of "work" in its own turn.[1]

It is precisely at this point that we see how Calvin brought a characteristic Lutheran idea to its logical fulfillment, eliminating any cranny of ambiguity into which the enemies of the Reformation might thrust their destructive weapons. He never allowed his treatment of justification by faith to start on this circuitous route back to works and merit. The organization of the relevant sections in his Instruction is illuminating:

No. 12: "WE APPREHEND CHRIST THROUGH FAITH." We embrace him through faith and acknowledge him as given to us.

---

[1] Luther, Works, I, 193, 195; II, 322.

But though "the word of the Gospel calls all to participate in Christ," yet "a number, blinded and hardened by unbelief, despise such a unique grace."[1] Thus we are immediately confronted with the problem: Why do some have faith and others not?

No. 13. The next section is on "ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION," and makes clear that having or not having faith has nothing whatever to do with our own volitions, but rests entirely upon "the great secret of God's counsel." "For the seed of the word of God takes root and brings forth fruit only in those whom the Lord, by his eternal election has predestined to be children and heirs of the heavenly kingdom."[2]

Then follow sections 14: on "WHAT TRUE FAITH IS" ("a firm and solid confidence of the heart, by means of which we rest surely in the mercy of God which is promised to us through the gospel"); 15: "FAITH IS A GIFT OF GOD"; 16: "WE ARE JUSTIFIED IN CHRIST THROUGH FAITH"; and 17: "WE ARE SANCTIFIED THROUGH FAITH IN ORDER TO OBEY THE LAW."[3]

In other words, Calvin at the very outset ties faith securely to divine grace, and subordinates it by making it entirely dependent upon the latter. The same order is strongly suggested in the plan of the Institutes where the doctrine of God, including a fulsome treatment of divine providence, precedes the sections on justification, and the discussion of election follows it. And in the relevant sections of the

---

[1] Calvin, Instruction in Faith, p. 35.

[2] Ibid., p.36.

[3] Ibid., pp. 38-42.

final edition of the Institutes the term used is not "Justification by Faith," but "Gratuitous Justification."[1]

Predestination

It is to the cluster of doctrines generally considered most characteristic of Calvin's thought that we now turn. They all derive directly from the idea of the all-controlling power and the all-ordaining will and decree of God. The irresistible grace which we have seen entering strongly into Calvin's treatment of justification is one aspect of this central notion. Although usages of the various terms involved in its expression vary, we shall use "Predestination" as the general term for this whole group of related ideas. Under this heading the major topics will be "Election" and "Reprobation," as concerning the divine sovereignty in respect to man's eternal destiny; and "Providence" as the term for God's control of temporal events of cosmic and human history.

Although as we have seen, a strong doctrine of election is a necessary logical correlate of justification by faith through grace alone, and Luther often drew this inference, nevertheless a measure of the difference between Calvin and Luther is clearly discernible in the different moods with which the two men approach this doctrine. Luther approached it with fear and trembling and except on rare occasions when his belligerence got the better of him urged

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, Bk. III, chaps. 12, 13.

the pious to forget the question of predestination and to concentrate on faith and the love of God in Christ.[1] Calvin, on the contrary, characteristically exalted the positive values of this doctrine. He seems to have achieved what Luther counseled, namely, to have seen God only as "clothed and mantled in the Word."[2] To be sure, he could admit that "the discussion of predestination may be compared to a dangerous ocean." Still he went on to say:

> In traversing over it, the navigation is safe and serene, and I will also add pleasant, unless anyone freely wished to expose himself to danger. For as those who, in order to gain an assurance of their election, examine into the eternal counsel of God without the word, plunge themselves into a fatal abyss, so they who investigate it in a regular and orderly manner, as it is contained in the word, derive from such inquiry the benefit of peculiar consolation.[3]

Such being his attitude we can readily understand how for Calvin the divine sovereignty became virtually the pivot for his entire system. He could assert that "the honour of God and the salvation of the world depended on this doctrine and that they who opposed it assailed God, and that unity on this subject must be established, cost what it might."[4] He did not so value it from the very beginning of his theological work. In the first Institutes of 1536 a

---

[1] Luther, Works, VI, 459 f.

[2] Bainton, p. 219, quoting WA XL, 2, 329 f.

[3] Calvin, Institutes, II, 222.

[4] Hunter, p. 95. Cf. Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 324: "If we must speak of a 'central point' in the theology of Calvin, then we can only single out this one: the doctrine of Election in Jesus Christ."

[illegible]

[illegible]

> [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

double decree did not appear as a separate doctrine. It is even possible that at this point Calvin thought of predestination only as a correlate of divine foreknowledge--the position he controverted so mightily later on.[1] The decisive step toward his mature doctrine was taken in the Instruction of 1537, as we have seen:

> The seed of the word of God takes root and brings forth fruit only in those whom the Lord, by his eternal election, has predestined to be children and heirs of the heavenly kingdom. To all others (who by the same counsel of God are rejected before the foundation of the world) the clear and evident preaching of the truth can be nothing but an odor of death unto death.[2]

Yet even here Calvin deprecates looking into the mystery lying behind the divine decree. And the doctrine is not mentioned in his Confession of Faith of 1537, nor explicitly stated in the Second Catechism of 1541. Of the four Confessions attributed to Calvin three allude only in passing to predestination and then only in the positive sense of election. That drawn up for the Synod of Paris mentions it specifically, but only in the positive form. In the Creed which teachers and pupils of the Geneva Academy had to sign it did not appear.[3] We may be justified in assuming this slow development to be due to three causes: first, the need of time

---

[1] Wendel, pp. 201 f.; cf. Institutes, II, 175 ff., 182, 192 ff.

[2] Calvin, Instruction in Faith, p. 36.

[3] Hunter, pp. 94 f. In the French Confession, approved at Paris in 1559, it is true that no decree of reprobation is specified, but it is said that God leaves "the rest in this same corruption and condemnation to show in them his justice"; Schaff, Creeds, III, 367.

for the full implications of justification by grace alone to reveal themselves clearly; second, Calvin's sense of the difficulties which the idea of reprobation does cause for many; and third, the fact that it was largely in response to attacks on the doctrine that Calvin developed his full-scale exposition of it.[1]

Election

We need not retrace the argument by which it has been shown how the doctrine of election flows from that of justification. Pauck has summarized the case very well:

> Predestination. . .was for Calvin an appendix to the doctrine of justification by grace. He was a predestinarian because he believed absolutely in the initiative of the God of mercy. If a man cannot rely upon himself for his salvation but must throw himself upon God's merciful goodness, then he must also be willing to acknowledge that in all respects he is God's and not his own--particularly with regard to his eternal destiny.[2]

This naturally suggests the connection between election by irresistible grace and the first of the two governing considerations which we earlier pointed out: the glory of God and the desire to ascribe all good to Him alone. "We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be," Calvin

---

[1] Hunter, p.96, suggests this last factor. It is possible also that a change in Calvin's character accounts for some of these developments. Fuhrmann says, "There is no doubt that the early works of Calvin. . .were superior because of Calvin's early character. . . .not yet old before his time; not yet opposed on all sides; not yet irritated by all kinds of misunderstandings, difficulties, cares; not yet consumed by illness. The early Calvin had a sense of Love of God, and spoke of ardent charity toward one's neighbor"; Calvin, Instruction, p.10.

[2] Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950), pp. 62 f.

declared, "that our salvation flows from the fountain of God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with his eternal election."[1] Since man is so prone to "glory in having answered at least to his call, and accepted his free offers," God specifically "affirms that men have no ears to hear, or eyes to see, but such as he has formed." Otherwise, "the will of man is superior to the counsel of God."[2]

The second major consideration with Calvin, representing his overruling practical concern, was the assurance of the believer; and here again election is requisite. At least, so Calvin thought. For Luther the ground of assurance had been the character of God as seen in Christ. But since the character of God, on the theory of His absolute sovereignty, accounts for all things, damnation as well as salvation, Calvin perceived that peace of mind is only to be found in a certainty that one is among that group to whom God has chosen to show mercy.

Obviously such peace cannot be found in doing the works commanded by God, for no one is ever able to determine with certainty for himself that he has fulfilled the law, "as in fact, no man ever does completely satisfy it by any works of his own."[3] Nor can faith itself be the "work" required, "for with respect to justification, faith is a thing merely passive, bringing nothing of our own to conciliate the favour of God, but receiving what we need from Christ."[4] Even apart

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 170.

[2] Ibid., p. 220.

[3] Ibid., I, 835.

[4] Ibid., p. 838.

from the fact that faith, in itself, is of no value, it is urged by the Scriptures themselves "that the promises of God have no efficacy, unless they be embraced by the conscience with a steady confidence; and whenever there is any doubt or uncertainty, it pronounces them to be made void."[1] But who ever knew of such constant power of confident faith in any mortal? Hence, "we must seek for peace only in the terrors of Christ our Redeemer."[2] It has been urged, by Brunner and Hunter, for example, that the root of Calvin's emphasis upon election lies in his conviction of the absolute inability of man to do good, even to make a decision of faith.[3] But Torrance, in a very careful study of Calvin's doctrine of man, denies that this is the case. He argues that Calvin's estimate of man is a reflex of his doctrine of God, not vice versa.[4] That is, we do not argue from our knowledge of ourselves to God, or to anything about God's works. Total depravity, for all the vigor with which Calvin states it,[5] is not therefore a doctrine which stands in its own right. It

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 837.

[2] Ibid.; cf. Instruction in Faith, p. 39.

[3] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 342; Hunter, pp. 103 ff.

[4] T. F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), p. 13. Cf. Institutes, I, 48.

[5] Cf. Institutes, I, 275: "Our nature is not only destitute of all good, but is so fertile in all evils that it cannot remain inactive. . . .every thing in man, the understanding and will, the soul and body, is polluted and engrossed by this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, . . .man is of himself nothing else but concupiscence."

is "properly a corollary of the doctrine of grace. . . . Just because the Gospel speaks of man's salvation in total terms, the doctrine of depravity must be enunciated in total terms."[1]

Thus the elect enjoy a sublime confidence in this reflection: "The Lord having drawn us to him, will he not uphold us, and guide us to the end?"[2] But how does one know he is of the elect? That Calvin ever felt the full force of this question--a question which above all others strikes at the root of confidence in God's goodness--it is almost impossible to believe. He disposes of it with such sunny assurance, such complete certainty, that we are constrained to believe that he never for an instant doubted that he was among the elect. Nor is this surprising in view of his practical, straightforward piety, his central discovery of justification by faith, and his notion of the criteria by which one may judge concerning one's election.

Calvin adduces various grounds for confidence concerning one's eternal destiny. To be sure, we cannot point to the universal promises of Scripture.[3] And Calvin definitely discourages any attempt to force one's "way into the secret recesses of Divine wisdom" with a view to finding out that which "is determined concerning him at the tribunal

---

[1] Torrance, p. 83. Schaff, Creeds, I, 303, points out that whereas the Lutherans tended to argue to unconditional predestination from the anthropological premise, Calvin did so from the conviction of divine sovereignty.

[2] Calvin, Sermons, p. 39.

[3] Ibid., pp. 96 ff.

of God." Rather, we should look for certain visible signs which attest our election. One of these is baptism. "This is the earnest. . . of our election; it is the pledge which we have of our being called to the heavenly inheritance."[1] But what of the baptised who are obviously reprobate? Calvin then answers that it is those who have faith who are elect. Christ "is he in whom the pledge of our election is presented to us if we receive him and embrace him through faith."[2] But what if faith wavers? For the elect "the invariable issue of this contest is, that faith at length surmounts those difficulties, from which, while it is encompassed with them, it appears to be in danger."[3] To be sure, the reprobate seem at times to have sure faith too;[4] but "they never attain any solid effect and enjoyment."[5] All this suggests that the elect know themselves to be such because they know it! However, an additional objective test is provided by "the consideration of works," the "fruits of vocation" which testify to our being "invested with the santification [sic] of Christ,"

---

[1] Calvin, Sermons, p. 95.

[2] Instruction in Faith, p.37; Institutes, II, 224 f.

[3] Ibid., I, 619.

[4] Indeed, sometimes God imparts the "special call," the "inward illumination of his Spirit" to "those whom he only enlightens for a season, and afterwards forsakes on account of their ingratitude, and strikes with greater blindness"; Institutes, II, 227.

[5] Ibid., I, 609. Hunter, p.133, shows that unbelief was not taken by Calvin as a certain sign of reprobation.

the Spirit of regeneration.[1]

If, then, one is able to pass these tests of faith and works, he is in a position to rejoice in the mercy and goodness of God toward him in calling him with an immutable will and with irresistible power to eternal salvation. From this point of view James Denney writes, "The genuine Calvinism makes the redeeming love of God the alpha and omega, the ultimate reality on which the universe rests."[2] There is only one remaining question: What about those not elect?

Reprobation

That Calvin's development of the doctrine of election involved the affirmation of a decree of reprobation as well has been made clear. At this point our concern is only to examine the implications of this fact for the idea of divine goodness, to which Calvin believed election to give vivid testimony.

Brunner assembles some evidence to indicate that Calvin did not emphasize the negative aspect of predestination in his preaching.[3] Hunter has also shown how lightly he touched upon it in his creedal formulations.[4] This indicates that he realized how little edification there is in the no-

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 21, 228; Calvin actually quoted Augustine with approval in the assertion that the elect are gifted with "an inability to commit sin"! Ibid., I, 331, quoting De Corr. et Grat.

[2] Hunter, title-page, quoting Letters of Principal James Denney, p. 110.

[3] Brunner, Doctrine of God, pp. 324 f.

[4] Hunter, pp. 94 f.

tion of reprobation. On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that he was completely convinced of its reality and almost alone among the Reformers did not hesitate to say so. "It is an awful decree, I confess; but no one can deny that God foreknew the future final fate of man before he created him, and that he did foreknow it because it was appointed by his own decree."[1] God hardens men, not after a manner of speaking only, i.e., in the sense that he foresees their failure; but positively, in two ways. He withdraws His spirit, which means that He is "properly said to blind, harden, and incline those whom he deprives of the power of seeing, obeying, and acting aright." And by using Satan as "the minister of his wrath," He "directs their counsels to what he pleases, and excites their wills and strengthens their efforts"[2]--toward evil! Here, then, we have a double decree explicitly stated in supralapsarian terms.[3] For what reasons was Calvin led to a view which seems to clash so sharply with the idea of God's love and goodness?

Undoubtedly the influence of Augustine was great. In his Treatise on Predestination Calvin wrote of the former,

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 207. Hunter, pp. 109 f., points out how Bucer and others tried with more or less persistence to separate election from predestination.

[2] Institutes, I, 336 f.; here Calvin is actually arguing against his beloved Augustine in emphasizing the positive character of God's hardening.

[3] Other passages which seem to make the supralapsarian interpretation virtually mandatory are found in Institutes, II, 184, 203 f. Hunter, p. 127, argues that Calvin gives no clear teaching on this subject, speaking on both sides on occasion. The evidence I have been able to assemble points in the other direction, however.

"He agrees so well on all points with us, that if I had to make a confession on this subject, it would suffice me to compose it of statements drawn from his books."[1] Yet as we have seen, Calvin did not hesitate to go beyond Augustine on this particular point. He also stated the matter much more sharply than Bucer, who is thought to have influenced his early formulations.[2] He relied, of course, upon Biblical texts to support his position; and undoubtedly he himself thought he was simply expounding the clear word of God.[3] But Wesley, who was so bitterly opposed to Calvin on this score, was also a Biblical literalist. He believed that he read the contrary of a decree of reprobation in the Scriptures;[4] and in this opinion he is joined by a multitude of others including many of the "orthodox" teachers of the church.

More positive reasons for Calvin's interpretation of the Scriptures on this subject are to be found in three considerations which he himself adduces. First, there is the belief that, as Zwingli also held, the reprobation of some is requisite to a proper display of the glories of God. The grace of God, he argues, is clearly shown only "by this comparison, that he adopts not all promiscuously to the hope of

---

[1] Wendel, p. 90, quoting Traité de la Prédestination. Cf. Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 325.

[2] Cf. Pauck's discussion, pp. 79 ff.

[3] Cf. his justification of the tenor of his teaching, Institutes, II, 182 ff.

[4] John Wesley, Works (3rd ed.; London: John Mason, 1830), X, "Predestination Calmly Considered," pp. 204 ff.

salvation, but gives to some what he refuses to others. Ignorance of this principle evidently detracts from the Divine glory."[1] This, indeed, is the note struck in his earliest treatment of this theme: "Let us take from the lot of both the elect and the others, reasons for extolling his glory."[2] The obvious conclusion is that the "glory" or the "grace" spoken of in these terms is something quite other than--in fact, incompatible with--moral goodness.

A second consideration of which Calvin makes much is the fact of the difference between the response of believers and of others to the gospel. Indeed, it was from this fact that Bucer's predestinarian doctrine seems to have begun;[3] and no doubt it was equally significant for Calvin:

> Nothing is more evident, than that the preaching of the word is promiscuously common to all persons; but that the SPIRIT of faith is given by special privilege to the elect alone. The promises are common to all without exception. How then, does it come to pass that, their efficacy does not equally manifest itself in all? Truly, because God does not reveal his arm to all.[4]

This realistic grappling with the problem of sin has a certain commendable sturdiness. Thomas Huxley, unbeliever that he was, asserted on this account that Calvinism was the only system of theology which faced the facts of life.[5] It faces

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 171.

[2] Instruction in Faith, p. 37. [3] Pauck, p. 79.

[4] Calvin's letter to Melanchthon, 1552; quoted in Beza, p. 304; cf. Wendel, pp. 204 f.; Calvin, Sermons, pp. 50, 105.

[5] Hunter, pp. 101, n. 53. It is extraordinarily interesting to reflect on the theoretical appeal which Calvinism has for unbelievers. Santayana, Philosophy of Santayana, p. 588, and Perry Miller, as for example in his Jonathan Edwards

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

> [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

them, however, in terms of a certain presupposition: namely, that God's decree and power account for all these facts. Its axiom is the omnipotence of God, expressing itself in minute control of every aspect of man's earthly career and his eternal destiny.

> God's sovereign election of some, and preterition of others, they make the subject of formal accusation against him. But if this is the known fact, what will they gain by quarrelling with God? We teach nothing but what experience has proved, that God has always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he chooses. I will not inquire how the posterity of Abraham excelled other nations, unless it was by that favour, the cause of which can only be found in God. Let them answer why they are men, and not oxen or asses; when it was in God's power to create them dogs, he formed them after his own image. . . .Their enjoyment of a privilege which they have acquired by no merits, is certainly no more reasonable than God's various distribution of his favours according to the measure of his judgment.[1]

With this third consideration we are led from the topic of election proper to the correlative concept of the total providential control of God. We must see these facts together in order to estimate their bearing on Calvin's judgment of God's goodness.

Providence

A few of Calvin's own statements will get his doc-

("The American Men of Letters Series"; William Sloane Associates, 1949), Foreword and passim, are two who share Huxley's favorable judgment. Is this because they recognize the affinities between Calvinism--in certain aspects at least--and an agnostic naturalism whose only ultimate recourse is to find some small measure of salvation in recognizing and proudly accepting--without cringing--the sway of vast and incalculable powers in whose grip we live?

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 182 f.

trine of divine providence clearly before us in its original flavor:

> The Creator of all things. . .is also their perpetual governor and preserver; and that not by a certain universal motion, actuating the whole machine of the world, and all its respective parts, but by a particular providence sustaining, nourishing, and providing for every thing which he has made.[1]
>
> All events are governed by the secret counsel of God. And respecting things inanimate, it must be admitted, that, though they are all naturally endued with their peculiar properties, yet they exert not their power, any further than as they are directed by the present hand of God. They are, therefore, no other than instruments into which God infuses as much efficacy as he pleases, bending and turning them to any actions, according to his will.[2]
>
> It is certain that not a drop of rain falls but at the express command of God.[3]
>
> We do not with the Stoics, imagine a necessity arising from a perpetual concatenation and intricate series of causes, contained in nature; but we make God the Arbiter and Governor of all things, who, in his own wisdom, has, from the remotest eternity, decreed what he would do, and now, by his own power, executes what he has decreed.[4]

Now all this does not mean that God operates with complete directness, without using means or instruments:

> The Divine ordination. . . .governs all things in such a manner as to operate sometimes by the intervention of means, sometimes without means, and sometimes in opposition to all means.[5]

Human free-will.--Human psychology is not the least of these means, and Calvin is careful to make clear that a certain limited autonomy is accorded to man's own will; it is not simply blotted out by the divine power. The two sides of the issue are stated in this pair of quotations:

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 218. [2] Ibid., p. 219.

[3] Ibid., p. 224. [4] Ibid., p. 228. [5] Ibid., p. 232.

> These madmen overlook what is obvious to every observer--that the arts of deliberation and caution in men proceed from the inspiration of God, and that they subserve the designs of his providence in the preservation of their own lives; as, on the contrary, by neglect and slothfulness, they procure to themselves the evils which he has appointed for them.[1]

> A pious man will not overlook inferior causes. Nor, because he accounts those from whom he has received any benefit, the ministers of the Divine goodness, will he therefore pass them by unnoticed, as though they deserved no thanks for their kindness; but will feel and readily acknowledge, his obligation to them, and study to return it as ability and opportunity may permit. Finally, he will reverence and praise God as the principal Author of benefits received, but will honour men as his ministers.[2]

Sometimes the note of human bondage is more strongly emphasized, as when Calvin appropriates the Augustinian figure of the will as a horse, ridden either by God or the devil.[3] Sometimes he compromises with the necessities of exhortation, and tells his readers: "You have to choose now in which number you would prefer to stand," i.e., the believers or unbelievers.[4] In general, the principle upon which he argues is that responsibility, i.e., capacity for guilt or merit, is attached not to a theoretical "power to the contrary" but rather to the psychological spontaneity with which an intelligent being acts, whether for good or evil. Thus God necessarily does the good, the devil evil, and man, because of the Fall, also necessarily but spontaneously does evil unless regenerated by irresistible grace. But God is praiseworthy

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 238. [2] Ibid., p. 243

[3] Ibid., p. 334. Luther also uses this figure, Bondage of the Will, pp. 61 f.

[4] Calvin, Institutes, I, 770.

and men and the devil damnable.[1] The particular bearing of this view will be explored when we come to discuss God and His responsibility for evil.

Reasons for Calvin's doctrine of providence.--It is worth while to note the considerations which impelled Calvin to cling to a doctrine which seemed to saddle God with responsibility for evil, natural and supernatural. Part of the reason seems actually to have lain in Hellenistic currents of thought which came to Calvin through humanism, as they did to Zwingli and with a similar result.[2] In his first book, the Commentary on the De Clementia of Seneca, he lauds Stoic determinism, saying, "It is also the teaching of our religion, that there is no power but that of God, and that all is ordained of God, according to Romans 13."[3] To Calvin this seemed like a postulate of reason. "Nothing would be more inconsistent with Deity, than to abandon the government of the world, leave it to fortune and connive at the crimes of men."[4] All men instinctively share this belief that "there

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 318 ff.; cf. the discussion by Hunter, pp. 120 ff. It is interesting to find Brunner, who is usually so respectful toward the Reformers, speaking of this element in Calvin's thought as not only "unsatisfactory" but even as "painful and dishonest." Brunner, Creation and Redemption, p. 172.

[2] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 131, also cites the Neoplatonist influence of Augustine.

[3] Wendel, p. 14. Hunter, pp. 50 f., p. 99, stresses the Stoic influence on Calvin at this point, but also, p. 126, shows his rejection of a "necessity" which would override divine freedom.

[4] Institutes, I, 59.

is some divinity by whose power they stand or fall."[1] If God does not govern all things, then we must "substitute nature in the place of God,"[2] or else simply invoke chance.[3] Not only does this completely stultify the demand of the mind for a reason for all things, but it shuts up God "as an idler in heaven."[4] And to this, of course, the whole Biblical witness to God is unalterably opposed.[5]

But although Calvin finds his proof for the absolute providence of God in such grounds as these, it is more significant for our inquiry that he waxes eloquent regarding the practical uses of this doctrine for Christian faith and life. Only reflection on such a passage as this, but one among many, will discover the force of this practical interest in divine sovereignty:

> Human life is beset by innumerable evils, and threatened with a thousand deaths. . . .Amidst these difficulties, must not man be most miserable, who is half dead while he lives, and is dispirited and alarmed as though he had a sword perpetually applied to his neck. . . .if he be subject to the dominion of fortune.
>
> On the contrary, when this light of Divine providence has once shined on a pious man, he is relieved and delivered not only from the extreme anxiety and dread with which he was previously oppressed, but also from all care. For, as he justly dreads fortune, so he ventures securely to commit himself to God. This, I say, is his consolation, to apprehend that his heavenly Father restrains all things by his power, governs all things by his will, and regulates all things by his wisdom, in such a manner, that nothing can happen but by

---

[1] Calvin, Instruction in Faith, p. 18.

[2] Institutes, I, 66. [3] Ibid., p. 229.

[4] Ibid., p. 59.

[5] See the Scripture passages embedded in the discussion of providence, Institutes, I, 217 ff.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

> his appointment. . . .How is it that their security remains unshaken, while the world appears to be revolving at random, but because they know that the Lord is universally operative, and confide in his operations as beneficial to them? Now, when their safety is attacked, either by the devil or by wicked men, if they were not supported by the recollection and contemplation of providence, they must necessarily and immediately faint. But when they recollect, that the devil and the whole army of the wicked are in every respect so restrained by the Divine Power, that they can neither conceive of any hostility against us, nor, after having conceived it, form a plan for its accomplishment, nor even move a finger towards the execution of such plan, any further than he has permitted, and even commanded them; and that they are not only bound by his chains, but also compelled to do him service,--they have an abundant source of consolations.[1]

Finally, Calvin was not lacking in that zeal to exalt the power, the glory, and the majesty of God, even at the cost of every human interest, which is so common a feature of much deep piety. Pauck makes this factor almost decisive[2] and though our analysis has led us to approach Calvin's doctrine of providence from another standpoint, it cannot be denied that there is much in his writings to indicate the importance of this piety of surrender and abasement.

> We are consecrated and dedicated to God, that we may not hereafter think, speak, meditate, or do any thing but with a view to his glory. . . .We are not our own; therefore neither our reason nor our will should predominate in our deliberations and actions. . . .We are not our own; therefore let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and all things that are ours. On the contrary, we are God's; to him, therefore, let us live and die. We are God's; therefore let his wisdom and will preside in all our actions. . . .O, how great a proficiency has that man made, who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken the sovereignty and government of himself from his own reason, to surrender it to God![3]

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 245-247.

[2] Pauck, p. 61.

[3] Institutes, I, 751 f.

> They that would not have us speak of God's election, will say, it is not necessary. But such men never tasted God's goodness, neither do they know what it is to come to our Lord Jesus Christ. If we know not that we are saved because it pleased God to choose us before the world began, how can we know that which St. Paul saith to us; to wit, that we should give ourselves wholly to God, to be disposed of at his will, and to live and die in his service.[1]

One of the finest expressions of this mood in Calvin's writings is found in his introduction to the Commentary on Psalms:

> The bearing of the cross is a genuine proof of our obedience, since by doing this, we renounce the guidance of our own affections, and subject ourselves entirely to God, leaving him to govern us, and to dispose of our life according to his will, so that the afflictions which are the bitterest and most severe to our nature, become sweet to us, because they proceed from him.[2]

Implications of Predestination

With this understanding of Calvin's predestinarian doctrine achieved, we are in a position to form an hypothesis regarding his understanding of the goodness of God. His concerns are primarily practical, namely, to assert the glory of God together with His immediate efficacy and power against its dilution by the mediating sacerdotal system of Rome; and at the same time to provide the Protestant believer with certainty of salvation and fighting courage for the reforming struggle. Justification by faith through irresistible grace alone was the key doctrine which he inherited from Luther and which perfectly served his two chief concerns.

---

[1] Calvin, Sermons, p. 44.

[2] Commentary on Psalms, I. xxxix.

In its exposition, however, he was led by logical considerations and by his particular practical interests to clarify and emphasize the predestinarian implications of justification by grace. These included the election of the saints and the reprobation of the damned, together with the correlative notion of God's minute and absolute control over all temporal events. All these, from the standpoint of a thinker who never doubted his own election and was concerned almost entirely for the practical interests and edification of the church of the elect, spoke eloquently of the goodness of God, His love, mercy, grace, and justice as well as of His metaphysical glory. But it was a goodness exclusively conceived in terms of the elect. Outside that circle Calvin had no real interest, and hence no concern to vindicate the ways of God to men. With this hypothesis in mind we may proceed to explore other topics bearing upon the question of divine goodness, to see if they verify or modify it.

God and Moral Order

It is to be assumed that in Calvin's thought God's moral goodness, indeed, His overflowing love, is a postulate so far as the elect are concerned. But to what extent is this concept applicable to God in Himself, as a basic character of His being, and not simply a functional attribute in relation to a certain group of men? This question may be explored first in connection with the general idea of God's relation to a moral order apprehensible by mankind in general.

God and Moral Norms

There is considerable material in Calvin's writings to support the affirmation that for him God was essentially conceived in terms of conformity to moral norms. He stoutly asserts, for example, that God is not capricious, that in the words of Scripture, "he cannot deny himself."[1] He is trustworthy, and hence orderly to that extent. Moreover Calvin explicitly attacks the "notion of the Romish theologians concerning the absolute and arbitrary power of God, which, on account of its profaneness, deserves our detestation." In contrast, Calvin says God is not lawless, but "a law to himself."[2] In his commentary on Isaiah 23:9 he writes that the

> invention which the Schoolmen have introduced, about the absolute power of God, is shocking blasphemy. It is all one as if they said that God is a tyrant who resolves to do what he pleases, not by justice, but through caprice. Their schools are full of such blasphemies, and are not unlike the heathen, who said that God sports with human affairs.[3]

There is some question here as to what scholastic thinkers Calvin is referring to. Duns Scotus has been nominated; but recent studies have shown that in Scotus the absolute power of God is limited by the principle of non-contradiction, and also by His own nature, that is, His goodness.[4] Calvin may

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 146. [2] Ibid., p. 202.

[3] John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851), II, 152.

[4] Cf. Étienne Gilson, Jean Duns Scot (Paris: Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1952), pp. 308 ff.; Wendel, p. 93.

have wished to show his hostility to the distinction of the Scotists between the "absolute power" and the "ordaining power" of God.[1] Or he may have been beating his opponents with any stick at hand! At any rate the point is clear: God "is independent of all law, in the sense that he is his own law and the norm of all things."[2] Indeed, man ought to evaluate his own moral achievement by God's nature, His righteousness, innocence, and holiness, which "is the only standard by which this judgment ought to be formed."[3] The conscience of even pagan men is "a kind of medium between God and man" which presumably gives a valid understanding of the divine justice which judges us.[4] And again, the principle of reward for merit is honored by God, although only in respect to the good works of the elect--which seems a bit unfortunate since presumably they are the ones who least need such credit![5] Finally, since all men are enjoined to acknowledge the goodness of God but it is admitted that "nothing is really amiable to us but what we know to be conducive to our benefit and salvation," the conclusion would seem to follow that God is genuinely good in Himself.[6]

Divine justice.--Then there is the whole topic of the justice of God, which is inextricably involved in the

---

[1] Wendel, p. 93 f. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[3] Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 48 f.

[4] *Ibid.*, II, 91; cf. 450 ff. [5] *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 62, 69.

[6] *Ibid.*, I, 775 f.; cf. *Instruction in Faith*, pp. 18 f.; *Sermons*, p. 73, on the goodness shown in nature's "abundance."

question of His relation to moral norms. As we have seen, Calvin's doctrine of the atonement implies a norm of justice with which even God's will to mercy must come to terms. And this justice is constantly reaffirmed throughout Calvin's works. The decree of reprobation is specifically stated to be "guided by equity, unknown indeed to us, but indubitably certain."[1] It is granted, however, that this justice is "incomprehensible."[2] At this point Calvin echoes the argument of Zwingli: God is simply "just" by definition. "How could any injustice be committed by him who is the Judge of the world? If it is the peculiar property of the nature of God to do justice, then he naturally loves righteousness and hates iniquity." Yet all this must be understood in terms of the qualification that "the reason of the Divine justice is too high to be measured by a human standard, or comprehended by the littleness of the human mind."[3]

This elevation of the justice of God in the damnation of sinners above human understanding is modified by one persistent trend of argument. All men are worthy of damnation in the sight of God; when He chooses some to receive His mercy He is not thereby unjust to the rest, even by human standards.[4] Original sin makes even newborn babes obnoxious to God;[5] all of us are soiled by infinite filth

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 209. [2] Ibid., p. 181.

[3] Ibid., pp. 203 f.; cf. p. 241, Sermons, pp. 99 f.

[4] Institutes, II, 211 f. [5] Ibid., p. 590.

of congenital corruption;[1] hence all are properly damnable.[2] Furthermore, the elect do good works which God may properly reward, even if chiefly out of generous mercy; while the reprobate persistently and wilfully flout His commandments and hotly sin away to their own destruction.[3] This latter argument rests, however, on that curious interpretation of moral responsibility as stemming from human spontaneity within the absolute control of divine necessity which we noted earlier; and can hardly be taken as serious reasoning. And the notion that men are "obnoxious" to God by virtue of an inherited corruption makes His distaste really aesthetic rather than moral--comparable to human feelings about rats or snakes rather than about *moral* beings. Finally, Calvin provides at least a partial refutation for this conception by emphasizing in a number of places that the intrinsic glory of the *imago dei* in *all* men is worthy of respect.[4]

---

[1] Calvin, *Instruction in Faith*, pp. 22 f.

[2] *Institutes*, I, 274, 277 f.

[3] *Ibid*., II, 213.

[4] This may sound doubtful in view of the dictum that the divine image "was so corrupted that whatever remains is but horrible deformity"; *Institutes*, I, 208. But this does not really make sense in view of many other statements; e.g., "the image of God includes all the excellence in which the nature of man surpasses all the other species of animals"; (*ibid*.), an excellence upon which Calvin has just expatiated in terms of empirical natural gifts of intelligence, beauty, etc. Moreover, human ethical responsibility is grounded in the need to "honor and love" the image of God in men, regardless of their particular merits (*ibid*., p. 758.)

Divine freedom.--More decisive word on the relation of God to moral norms is given by passages which exalt His freedom. God is free to act according to His "mere good pleasure."[1] And with this idea is coupled Calvin's emphasis upon the Will of God as its own rule and indeed the only final cause and rule for action. "God favours his elect because he will, and has mercy because he will";[2] we should seek no cause of hardening or mercy beside his "mere will."[3] One passage sums up the matter:

> How exceedingly presumptuous it is only to inquire into the causes of the Divine will; which is in fact, and is justly entitled to be, the cause of every thing that exists. For if it has any cause, then there must be something antecedent, on which it depends; which it is impious to suppose. For the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it.[4]

Yet the summary does not quite stand; for repeatedly Calvin asserts that there are "reasons"[5] for the operation of that will, even though indiscernible by us; that it operates by His "wonderful counsel,"[6] according to a certain direction and purpose.[7] The coupling of "wisdom, power, and justice" is frequent.[8] The fact is that Calvin was not willing to admit the sheer voluntarism to which most of his exposition pointed, but the "reason" or "wisdom" which modified it are

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 171; cf. pp. 177, 211.

[2] Ibid., p. 193. [3] Ibid., p. 198.

[4] Ibid., p. 201; cf. Vol. I, 178, 229; Sermons, p. 41.

[5] Institutes, I, 236. [6] Ibid., p. 228. [7] Ibid., p. 229.

[8] Ibid., p. 178; cf. pp. 222 f.

almost impossible to define.[1]

God and law.--Nor do we find much help in Calvin's use of the concept of law. He usually treats law strictly in terms of the divine command, i.e., as an expression of Will.[2] He does speak of the law of God as His "eternal will." But this seems to mean only that it is immutable, not that the law represents some kind of "structure" in that will.[3]

God and Evil

The natural inference from Calvin's predestinarian doctrines is that God is responsible for evil. This he freely grants in the sense that God's will is the efficient cause of all events. But this does not mean that He is the author of evil as evil, which Calvin is eager to deny.[4] This he will not do by invoking any kind of dualism, however. The devil has strictly limited powers and is, as we have seen, actually used by God.[5] A number of other considerations are cited.

First, and perhaps most important, Calvin lays down the principle which we have found Zwingli also using, that

---

[1] Cf. the discussion by Hunter, pp. 53 ff.

[2] Calvin, Institutes, II, 455.

[3] Instruction in Faith, p. 24. Cf. infra, the paragraph on natural law.

[4] He comes very close to it, however. Cf. Hunter, p. 142, quoting the Consensus Pastorum compiled by Calvin: "God does not merely allow sin; it happens actually by His will."

[5] Institutes, I, 180 f., 196.

God can do that which is evil for men without being stained by it. Whence

> proceeds the fetid smell of a carcass, which has been putrefied and disclosed by the heat of the sun? It is visible to all that it is excited by the solar rays; yet no person on this account attributes to those rays an offensive smell. So, when the matter and guilt of evil resides in a bad man, why should God be supposed to contract any defilement, if he uses his service according to his own pleasure?[1]

The fact that this illustration makes God's action as blind and mechanical as a natural force did not seem to occur to Calvin. In another vein, however, he resorts to the somewhat different argument that the motive makes the difference between divine goodness and human sin in the same act. Thus in the case of Job, for example, "the design of the Lord is to exercise the patience of his servant by adversity; Satan endeavours to drive him to despair; the Chaldeans, in defiance of law and justice, desire to enrich themselves by the property of another." Not only the end, but the manner of the act is different--and here the bankruptcy of this position becomes obvious: God "permits his servant to be afflicted"; the Chaldeans and the devil deliberately do the evil.[2] But Calvin has repeatedly stated that with God "permission" is effective decree;[3] and in any event, He also is the motivating force behind the evil wills, the "rider" of the horse![4] Equally feeble is the not infrequent argument that men are justly punished because of their wilful sin, an assertion

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 239.

[2] Ibid., pp. 335 f.

[3] Ibid., pp. 252 f.

[4] Ibid., p. 334.

which rests upon the untenable divorce of responsibility from real freedom which we have already discussed.[1] The failure of such a powerful mind as Calvin's to recognize the pitiful weakness of these notions should probably be understood as indicating a lack of any real concern on his part for what happens to the reprobate.

This conclusion is strengthened by consideration of the positive way in which Calvin handles the problem of evil for the elect. Here it disappears in the light of the certainty of redress in the future life;[2] and even more important, in the conviction that all apparent evils are providential blessings in disguise for God's saints. Over and over this theme is dealt with in most exalted and inspiring terms.[3] Certainly it is above all at this point that Calvin showed his power to win triumph out of hardship and to create in Reformed Christianity the indomitable fighting courage which carried it around the world. For the elect

> recollect, that the devil and the whole army of the wicked are in every respect so restrained by the Divine power, that they can neither conceive of any hostility against us, nor, after having conceived it, form a plan for its accomplishment, nor even move a finger towards the execution of such plan, any further than he has permitted, and even commanded them; and that they are not only bound by his chains, but also compelled to do him service.[4]

And if trouble does come--suffering, loss, or death--they are confident that all is for their good. It is to allow

---

[1] Cf., for example, Calvin, Institutes, I, 677 f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 72 f. [3] Ibid., pp. 763 f., 765 ff., 770.

[4] Ibid., p. 247.

them to display such virtues as patience,[1] to cause them to concentrate their affections on heavenly things,[2] or for other benefits. Thus while Luther's faith in his heavenly Father was shadowed by reflection on mortal ills,[3] Calvin draws the opposite conclusion: "In proportion as our minds are oppressed under the cross with the natural sense of affliction, so greatly are they dilated with spiritual joy."[4] But all this is true only for the elect: "when the reprobate are lashed by the scourges of God in this world, they. . . are not punished in order to their repentance, but only that from their great misery, they may prove God to be a judge who will inflict vengeance according to their crimes".[5]

The Depth of Divine Majesty

God's Transcendent Greatness

From the outset of this discussion the emphasis placed by Calvin upon the greatness and glory of God has been manifest. It needs no further emphasis, but its connection with the question of divine goodness has to be clarified. The early Instruction in Faith begins with this positive affirmation: "As no man is found, however barbarous and even savage he may be, who is not touched by some idea of religion, it is clear that we all are created in order that we may know the majesty of our Creator, that having known it,

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 768. [2] Ibid., p. 777.

[3] Bainton, pp. 364 f. [4] Institutes, I, 776.

[5] Ibid., pp. 720 f.

we may esteem it above all and honor it with awe, love, and reverence."[1] And toward the end of the Institutes the same note is sounded in the declaration that "plenitude of life consists in the perfect knowledge of God."[2] God's greatness is such that it increasingly commands our highest affection as well as respect, the better we know it. In the same spirit Calvin expounds the meaning of the term "Our Father" against the background of God's "incomprehensible essence, infinite magnitude or sublimity, irresistible power, and unlimited immortality." In this setting "the familiar appellation of Father is not only adapted to produce confidence, but also efficacious to prevent our minds from being seduced to dubious or fictitious deities, and to cause them to ascend. . .to the common Father of angels and of saints."[3]

With this last word, however, typical of Calvin's exclusive concentration upon the goodness of God to the elect, we pass into the more forbidding implications of divine greatness. For in its light "the folly of being afraid that too much cruelty is attributed to God, if the reprobate are doomed to eternal punishment, is even evident to the blind." To argue that such punishment is disproportionate to the crime "is intolerable blasphemy, when the majesty of God is so little valued, when the contempt of it is considered of no more consequence than the destruction of one soul."[4] In the same spirit, it is asserted that all human

---

[1] Calvin, Instruction in Faith, p. 17.

[2] Institutes, II, 622. [3] Ibid., pp. 150 f. [4] Ibid. p. 251.

goodness piled together is not sufficient to compensate for one sin which offends the divine righteousness.[1] This, surely, is an overwhelming, a searing, majesty.

This suggestion is reinforced by Calvin's comments on the "Divine perfection." This is chiefly defined in terms of a justice or purity in comparison with which all human goodness is not only inadequate but actually evil. When one examines the actions of men in the presence of this divine righteousness, it is found that they are "utterly defiled and polluted; that what is commonly considered as righteousness, is, in the Divine view, nothing but iniquity; that what is accounted integrity, is mere pollution."[2]

Depth of the Divine Mystery

Not only is God so great that no human values or interests can be put into the scales against His will, but His very nature is ultimately hidden from our sight. Our highest words only point toward the depth of a majesty which is an abyss for human thought. No note is more characteristic of Calvin than this; he is, perhaps, the most agnostic of the great Protestant theologians.[3] Again and again the futility of trying to grasp God by human reason is reiterated.[4]

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 16. [2] Ibid., I, 826 f.

[3] Although he does criticize theologians who "plung [sic] themselves into the abyss of the Divine omnipotence, in order to extinguish the light of truth"; Institutes, II, 673. This he applies more freely to his opponents than to himself, however. Few thinkers take that plunge more frequently than he!

[4] Torrance, pp. 129 ff., 131, 135, 136 f., 141 as-

This is why he so sharply criticizes all "speculation";[1] only in obedient acceptance of the revelation in Scripture is there any legitimate knowledge of God. (This, of course, can be read in two ways; and no doubt the practical desire to confine men's minds to the Bible for all guidance and doctrine was one source, if not indeed the chief one, of this insistence upon the incomprehensibility of God.) To be sure, Calvin also suggests with some eloquence that we look to God's "works" in nature for knowledge of His "perfections"; but this knowledge is only external and fragmentary at best, and leads to no solid understanding of His essence.[2] That essence we must not even attempt to find;[3] faith is what we must seek, and faith brings certainty, but not comprehension.[4]

A double aspect in God.--As with Luther, but even more markedly since there is less tendency for Calvin to affirm that Christ is ultimately a perfect revelation of the divine nature, there appears a duality in God. Sometimes this is expressed in terms of a distinction between God's "will" and His "precept." He commands men to do one thing, but with His hidden will compels them to do another.[5] Yet Calvin vigorously denies that there are really two "wills"

---

sembles a large amount of evidence on this score. Cf. Wendel, pp. 119-121. Institutes, I, 235 f.; 299 f.

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 132, 137, 178, 181.

[2] Instruction in Faith, p. 19; cf. Institutes, I, 41, 54, 63, 179.

[3] Ibid., p. 72. [4] Ibid., p. 614; cf. pp. 616 f. [5] Ibid., p. 259.

in God. Whilst in Him the will "is uniform and simple, it wears to us the appearance of variety; because the weakness of our understanding comprehends not how the same thing may be in different respects both agreeable to his will, and contrary to it." In contemplating this fact we must remember our "imbecility"![1]

This double aspect in God is also expressed in another way when the will of God is set over against His nature. Faith is an entirely practical matter. "For it is not of so much importance to us to know what he *is in himself*, as what he is *willing to be to us*. We find, therefore, that faith is a knowledge of the will of God respecting us, received from his word."[2]

Natural law.--This consistent refusal to admit that the human mind can really grasp anything of God's nature or counsel in itself is not interrupted by the recognition which Calvin gives to a certain validity in natural law. Man is given certain rules and conceptions of justice as his common endowment. The moral law is summed up in God's "eternal and immutable will, that he himself be worshipped by us all, and that we mutually love one another."[3] Fur-

---

[1] Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 258; cf. II, 240.

[2] *Ibid.*, I, 602 (italics ours); cf. p. 619. Brown, p. 91, points out this dualism as a characteristic peculiarity of Calvinist thought. Something more will be said about the dualism of God "in Himself" and God "in Christ" in the next section, on divine goodness.

[3] *Institutes*, II, 788.

thermore, "the law of God, which we call the moral law, is no other than a declaration of natural law, and that of conscience which has been engraven by God on the minds of men" and the whole rule of equity is prescribed in it.[1] Calvin often invoked the idea of the "order of nature" to enforce a moral judgment. In sum, he adopted the medieval tradition of natural law, but lowered the place of reason by giving increased emphasis to "conscience." The relatively small part it plays, according to McNeill, can be explained by Calvin's preoccupation with the realm of the supernatural rather than the mundane.[2] This confirms our judgment that in the things which really matter men cannot rest with confidence upon any deliverance of natural or moral reason but must simply await the inscrutable action of the hidden majesty of God.

The Divine Goodness

It is perfectly apparent that for Calvin God is entirely and unspeakably good, merciful, and kind in His will for the elect. Is there any evidence for a more general goodness from which all men could take hope?

Often that goodness is spoken of in apparently universal terms: "he will perpetually manifest also his mercy and kindliness toward them who have love for him and keep his Law."[3] He quotes Paul, "that he may exercise mercy on all."[4]

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 789.

[2] McNeill, Journal of Religion, XXVI, 179-182.

[3] Instruction in Faith, pp. 26 f. [4] Ibid., p. 34.

But in view of the explicit assertion that "election itself could not exist without being opposed to reprobation"[1] the apparent universalism here falls to the ground. All the lists of divine perfections--"clemency, goodness, mercy, justice, judgment, and truth";[2] "wisdom, goodness, might, justice, truth, mercy"[3]--do not bear on the point in question. Nor does the affirmation that God is "necessarily good."[4] Ethical motivation is derived from the beneficence of God,[5] and from His holiness,[6] but these again speak only of His goodness to the elect.

At times Calvin does speak of the creation as such testifying to goodness in God. This, indeed, is "the reason that induced him first to create all things, and now to preserve them."[7] Insofar as existence itself is a blessing, all creatures have grounds for praising God's goodness. Even the reprobate--and Calvin specifically refers to Judas--ought to be thankful for this "invaluable gift of God."[8]

Calvin also finds in the contemplation of God's providence grounds for inferring His goodness in a general sense. He punishes crimes, defends and avenges the innocent, prospers the good, and even allows the wicked to flourish for a

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 199. [2] Ibid., I, 111.

[3] Instruction in Faith, p. 61. [4] Institutes, I, 318.

[5] Instruction in Faith, p. 25. [6] Institutes, I, 746 f.

[7] Ibid., p. 69.

[8] John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846), III, 201.

time.[1] "The world was made chiefly for the sake of mankind," and they all derive some benefits from its course.[2] But while it is true that the order of nature was made such "that the fabric of the world should be a school in which we might learn piety, and thence be conducted to eternal life and perfect felicity," yet the Fall and the curse (both directly decreed by God!) have spoiled all this. Innocent creatures are involved in our guilt; and on the whole "we cannot, from a contemplation of the world, conclude that he is our Father," in spite of a certain kindness manifest there.[3]

God in Christ

It is in Christ alone that we are able to see the riches of divine goodness and mercy.[4] In him God "opens all the heavenly treasures."[5] We may "assure ourselves of God being a propitious Father, where Christ is acknowledged as a brother and Mediator."[6] But it is not explicitly stated that in Christ we see God's essence, the secret of His nature, the final clue to the abyss of His counsel. For those for whom Christ is given, he does indeed reveal God's loving will for them. But he does not reveal that "God is love."

Conclusions

This examination of a number of relevant topics

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, I, 70.

[2] Ibid., p. 225.

[3] Ibid., p. 367.

[4] Instruction in Faith, p. 38

[5] Ibid., p. 56.

[6] Institutes, I, 24.

seems to indicate that our hypothesis formulated on the basis of the doctrine of predestination was correct. For Calvin God is supremely good; but only in the restricted and discriminate sense of saving the elect by His free grace and love. Calvin never seriously attempts to show how God is morally good, good to mankind, by nature. He is "righteous" in the sense of displaying perfect rectitude, justice, holiness. He is possessed of supreme glory, but that glory is admirably displayed in the sin, the misery, and the punishment of the reprobate, expressly raised up for that purpose.[1] Here, then, the tension between metaphysical excellence and moral goodness is seen at its highest pitch. Unlike Zwingli, Calvin stays close to the personal categories of the Bible. God is supremely characterized by absoluteness of power, of will, of freedom, and of a "counsel" which is hardly to be correlated with human wisdom or reason. But even more than is the case with Zwingli's somewhat impersonal and pantheistic doctrine of God's metaphysical supremacy, it is difficult or impossible to unite perfect moral goodness with that concept of the divine Sovereign with which Calvin works.

---

[1] Calvin, Institutes, II, 197; cf. pp. 206, 235.

CHAPTER V

RICHARD HOOKER

Page

Concerning the Man 198

The Idea of Law 202

Reason and Will in God 208

Divine Goodness 215

Divine Perfection 216

Divine Justice 218

Divine Mercy and Love 220

The Rule of God 222

Providence 222

Predestination 226

The Problem of Evil 229

Conclusions 231

CHAPTER V

RICHARD HOOKER

Alone among the five thinkers with whom we are concerned in this study, Richard Hooker founded no great church movement nor even a school of theological thought. The others were reformers or revivalists. Great practical effects issued from the doctrine which they worked out and proclaimed. Hooker wrote but one book, The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.[1] This has been a classic from the century in which it was published and has had its practical effect, to be sure. Yet it founded no school but simply secured for its author a place of honor among that numerous group of thinkers who in corporate thought and life have worked out the infinite series of compromises which constitutes the doctrine and polity of the Church of England. For much of his active life, and perhaps the happiest part of it,[2] he was an Oxford don, blissfully immured in his college with his books

---

[1] The references in this paper are to The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, intro. by Henry Morley (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1888), Books I-IV; and to The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), II, which contains Books V-VIII, and certain sermons and minor works.

[2] C. J. Sisson, The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker and the Birth of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (Cambridge: University Press, 1940), is at pains to refute Walton's criticisms of Mrs. Hooker and to rehabilitate Hooker's matrimonial judgment. Yet there seems no doubt that his temper was eminently suited to academic life.

and friends. For a few years, from 1585 to 1591, he emerged into some public notoriety as Master of the Temple. Here he found himself engaged in a constant running skirmish with a clergyman of the Puritan persuasion who was also attached to the church of that institution. For some time, then, "the forenoon sermon spoke Canterbury; and the afternoon Geneva,"[1] Hooker vs. Travers. Wearying of this contention which was so unsuitable to his quiet, modest, and thoughtful temper, Hooker at length secured a country parish, and in the retired quiet of his parsonage he labored from 1591 until 1600 on the magnum opus which was to be his contribution to the defense of the Elizabethan establishment and the spirit of the Church of England.[2]

His theological contribution is not, therefore, the massive one of a Calvin, or even a Luther or a Wesley. More systematic than these others, perhaps, yet he did not attempt to deal at length with all the major points of Christian faith. His theological doctrine, in the narrower sense of the term, is only prolegomenon to his ecclesiastical theory. Yet relatively brief as it is, being confined chiefly to Book I of the Laws and to a few extant sermons, Hooker's theology still has considerable importance. Its very freedom from the heat and

---

[1] Izaak Walton, The Lives of Dr. John Donne; Sir Henry Wotton; Mr. Richard Hooker, et al. (London: Bell and Daldy, 1864), p. 186. Sisson, pp. xii-xiv shows Walton unreliable at many points.

[2] Outline of Hooker's life from Walton, pp. 145 ff.; McNeill, Books of Faith, pp. 61 ff.; Ronald Bayne, "Richard Hooker," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings, Vol. VI (1928).

polemic of active doctrinal discussion gives it a perspective and balance, the lack of which accounts for some of the puzzles and ambiguities which flourish in the works of more actively partisan theologians. We feel quite sure that Hooker is setting down what he really thinks about the question before him, rather than writing with one eye cocked on an opponent to see how he may get around him.[1]

Again, Hooker's occupation of the via media gives his work remarkable breadth. Almost alone among the thinkers with whom we are dealing he possessed a splendid first-hand knowledge, based on long reading in the original tongues, with both the Old and New Testaments, the Patristic theologians, the medieval Schoolmen, and also Reformed thought, at least in its Calvinistic version. He had been the protege of Bishop Jewel in the latter's Puritan days at Cambridge and he exhibits in his writings not only an acquaintance with Calvin but a tempered appreciation of him.[2] On the other hand, Calhoun can characterize Hooker's complex doctrine of law as being "in nearly all essential respects that which St. Thomas had so carefully described, seen now through the eyes

---

[1] Cf. McNeill, Books of Faith, p. 88.

[2] Hooker speaks of Calvin as "incomparably the wisest man that ever the French Church did enjoy," and for his divine knowledge debtor "only to God, the author of that most blessed fountain the Book of Life, and of admirable dexterity of wit," "Preface" to the Laws, p. 11. This appreciation of Calvin went back at least to Hooker's instruction in the Institutes at Oxford by his tutor and friend, the learned Puritan John Rainolds. There is some evidence, according to McNeill, that Rainolds was consulted on Books I-V of the Laws; McNeill, Books of Faith, p. 63.

of a sagacious English jurist and preacher."[1] Walton reports that his book was enthusiastically approved at Rome.[2] His wide reading and breadth of sympathy are manifest on nearly every page.

The moving description given by Walton of Hooker's devotion to the pastoral tasks of his rural parishes is sufficient evidence of the depth and sincerity of the piety out of which this thought came. He was no dilettante spinning speculative theories of the supernatural, but a man of true religion who attempted to set down as best he could something of the great vision of an ordered divine perfection which it is man's ultimate end to see clearly. Never, however, did the impact of divine power and mystery shake his confidence in the wisdom, faithfulness and dependability of God who "abhors confusion as contrary to His nature."[3]

It remains to point out that for a thinker so quiet and humble Hooker's influence has been extraordinarily large. The remarkable beauty of his prose style matches that of Walton's in the "Life" which immortalizes him, and to this sheerly literary excellence some of Hooker's persuasiveness must be ascribed. But his thought itself is noble and attrac-

---

[1] Calhoun, p. 441. McNeill, Books of Faith, p. 72, connects Hooker's use of the term "law of reason" with that of Christopher St. German, the able jurist of the reign of Henry VIII.

[2] Walton, pp. 198 f. McNeill, Books of Faith, pp. 78 f., adds that we need not assume this story to be authentic!

[3] Walton, p. 158.

tive, and on the secular side formed the basis of Locke's tremendously significant Treatise on Civil Government, even though it was developed there in a way which Hooker could hardly have approved.[1] Most important of all, by representing so perfectly the mediating and reasonable temper of Anglican thought he in turn helped shape and immensely strengthen that great tradition.[2] In so doing he qualified as a representative of one of the great permanent types of thought about man's apprehension of the nature of God.

The Idea of Law

As the title of his great work suggests, the heart of Hooker's contribution to theology as well as to ecclesiastical theory lies in the fundamental place which he assigns to the concept of law. This he defines as follows:

> That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the form and measure of working the same, we term a law. So that no certain end could ever be attained unless the actions whereby it is attained were regular, that is to say, made suitable, fit, and correspondent unto their end by some canon rule or law. . . .All things therefore do work after a sort according to law.[3]

---

[1] "Richard Hooker," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XI, (1952).

[2] Cf. the very prominent place given Hooker in the authoritative work of Paul Elmer More and Frank Leslie Cross, Anglicanism, The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century (Milwaukee, Wis.: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1935), p. xxii, and passim. McNeill, p. 71, calls Hooker "the primary inspirer of the rationalistic approach to theology and ecclesiology." But "rationalism" here is surely to be taken in the English way of empirical reasonableness rather than the Continental way of a priori speculation and deduction.

[3] Hooker, Laws, I. 2, pp. 60 f.

By law, then, Hooker means in the first instance not primarily a positive command nor a personally given and enforced rule. Rather he connects the term with the deeper notion of order as such, that order which existence itself requires, since a mere chaos would be nothing. "All things that are, have some operation not violent or casual."[1] Law is the kind of regularity which is described in the ordinary usage of "scientific law." It is a term of the greatest generality. But then he immediately adds to this most general conception the idea of command, precisely as in Aquinas the law is assimilated to the will of a monarch.[2] All things but God work "according to a law whereof some superiors [sic] unto whom they are subject is author."[3] A very significant aspect of the uniqueness of God is that "the works and operations of God have Him both for their worker and for the law whereby they are wrought. The being of God is a kind of law to His working; for that perfection which God is, giveth perfection to that He doth."[4] This coincidence of being and of order in God certainly would seem to be a most significant aspect of His metaphysical supremacy for one who ascribes so much significance to law as Hooker does.

Our writer then goes on to distinguish two kinds of divine working. One consists of "those natural, necessary,

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I. 2, pp. 60 f.

[2] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II. I. 91. 1.

[3] Hooker, I. 2, p. 61. [4] Ibid.

and internal operations of God" such as the generation of the Son, the procession of the Spirit and the like. These are beyond the compass of his argument because of the depth of the mystery which enfolds them. Yet we should probably not be mistaken in assuming that these also take place according to law, both because they are "necessary" and thus exclude any kind of contingency or randomness, and because of the general dictum that "the being of God is a kind of law to His working."

Hooker's concern, however, is with the second kind of divine operation, namely that whose workings "have their beginning and being by a voluntary purpose, wherewith God hath eternally decreed when and how they should be. Which eternal decree is that we term an eternal law."[1] With this distinction Hooker opens the way for a fundamentally personal view of deity. God is not simply a name for that principle of order which pervades the world. He is a transcendent governor whose writ runs through the universe but whose will is by no means lost in nor simply to be identified with the immanent law of its processes.

Here Hooker enters the caveat of reverence against any attempt to penetrate or to expound the inmost secret of this personal will of God.

> Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High, whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is, to know that we know Him not as indeed He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence when we confess

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.2, p. 61.

> without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above and we upon earth, therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few.[1]

This principle of the limitation of inquiry is specifically connected by Hooker with the mystery of the trinity; but it forms the general background of his whole view of the law of God. He does not attempt to discover the ultimate reason for the divine decree, but rather concentrates on showing how it operates.

In support of his general position that God works by law he cites the writers of classical antiquity, Homer, Anaxagoras, Plato, and the Stoics, who all agree not only upon the necessity of there being a first cause, but upon the notion that it observes "in working a most exact order or law."[2] This order, counsel, reason, way, or law which it observes must be from the first cause itself, as author. The reason for this is evident:

> Otherwise it should have some worthier and higher to direct it, and so could not itself be the first. Being the first, it can have no other than itself to be the author of that law which it willingly worketh by.[3]

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.2. p. 61. [2] Ibid., p. 62.

[3] Ibid. It is very interesting that in citing Plato he does not recognize that in the Timaeus, which had been a tremendously influential book throughout the formative period of European philosophy, God does in fact seem to be distinguished from and set over against the realm of Forms which would then be a kind of law to His working. However, the tradition had so long assimilated the Platonic cosmology to that of Genesis and to the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* that he was apparently unaware of any potential conflict at this point. Cf. the text and commentary in Francis MacDonald Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology, The Timaeus of Plato*, translated with a running commentary (London: Routledge &

Hooker's first and fundamental principle, then, is the pervasiveness of order throughout the universe, an order grounded in the very being and will of God in the form of an "eternal law," an "order which God before all ages hath set down with himself to do all things by." He recognizes, however, that in thus enlarging the signification of the term "law" to cover any kind of rule of orderly action and tracing such law into the divine being Himself he is speaking of something slightly different from what is ordinarily meant by that expression. "By law eternal the learned for the most part do understand the order, not which God hath eternally purposed Himself in all His works to observe, but rather that which with Himself he hath set down as expedient to be kept by all His creatures according to the several condition wherewith he hath endued them." That is, the term "eternal law" is ordinarily reserved for the positive ordination of God as universal sovereign concerning his creatures. In this second sense, the term includes a whole hierarchy of laws which apply to the various levels of the creation as it is ranged in order from angels to inanimate things. Correspondingly, this law "receiveth, according unto the different kind of things which are subject unto it, different and sundry kinds of names."[1]

Kegan Paul Limited, 1948), 27D-30C, pp. 21-41. Also A. E. Taylor, Plato, the Man and His Work (6th ed.; London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1949), pp. 440 ff., where the Demiurge is held to be the real creator of the material of the world but distinct from the Forms; and Raphael Demos, The Philosophy of of Plato (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), pp. 99 ff.

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.2 f., p. 64.

These Hooker sets forth systematically.[1]

There is the part which orders natural agents, which is usually called "Nature's Law," the law of nature. There is the "celestial and heavenly" law "which angels do clearly behold, and without any swerving observe." Then there is "the law of reason," which "bindeth creatures reasonable in this world." This in turn has several divisions. "That which bindeth them, and is not known but by special revelation from God" is called divine law. "Human law" is made by men, as they gather out of the divine law of revelation or out of the law disclosed by reason that which they consider expedient for governing themselves.[2]

All these, then, belong to the "eternal law" in the second sense of God's ordination for His creatures. When things are as they ought to be they are conformed to this law, in whichever branch of it is applicable to them. But even where they are not conformable to this eternal law in the second and positive sense, still they are

> notwithstanding in some sort ordered by the first eternal law. For what good or evil is there under the sun, what action correspondent or repugnant unto the law which God hath imposed upon His creatures, but in or upon it God doth work according to the law which Himself hath eternally purposed to keep, that is to say, the first law eternal.[3]

---

[1] Cf. the very full and helpful diagram of the whole scheme of laws in Francis Paget, An Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's Treatise of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899), facing p. 99.

[2] Hooker, Laws, I.3, pp. 64 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 65.

All things, then, both in order and in disorder are moved and worked upon by the regular, purposeful activity of God, by His eternal law in one or another of its manifestations. Hooker summarizes the whole complex order of law as it bears upon all aspects of human life in one paragraph of his noble prose:

> By that which we work naturally, as when we breathe, sleep, move, we set forth the glory of God as natural agents do, albeit we have no express purpose to make that our end, nor any advised determination therein to follow a law, but do that we do (for the most part) not as much thinking thereon. In reasonable and moral actions another law taketh place, a law by the observation whereof we glorify God in such sort, as no other creature else under man is able to do; because other creatures have not judgment to examine the quality of that which is done by them... .yea those men which have no written law of God to show what is good or evil, carry written in their hearts the universal law of mankind, the law of reason whereby they judge as by a rule which God hath given unto all men for that purpose. . . .How to glorify God in such sort as is required to the end He may be an everlasting Saviour, this we are taught by divine law. . . .So that in moral actions, divine law helpeth exceedingly the law of reason to guide man's life; but in supernatural it alone guideth. Proceed we further, let us place man in some public society with others, whether civil or spiritual: and in this case there is no remedy but we must add yet a further law. For although even here likewise the laws of nature and reason be of necessary use, yet somewhat over and besides them is necessary, namely, human and positive law, together with that law which is of commerce between grand societies, the law of nations and of nations Christian.[1]

Reason and Will in God

The foregoing passage makes it clear that reason is intimately connected with the operation of the laws by which all things are ordered. In the working of God Himself

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.16, p. 126, (italics ours).

"counsel is used, reason followed," as we have seen.[1] Indeed, Hooker specifically identifies the "counsel of God" and the eternal law of God.[2] By virtue of this connection mankind is able to apprehend by means of its gift of reason the way in which God would have it go. Even in such a matter as the interpretation of the sacraments we are to use the "true principles of reason grounded upon experience, nature and sense."[3] When his opponent Travers argued that the consent of all churches and good writers was against Hooker's opinion, he was quite startled, apparently, to have Hooker rejoin that "his best author was his own reason."[4] Whether accurately reported or not, the remark sounds quite possible.

To be sure, Hooker never expects that by our own intelligence we may penetrate the inner secrets of the highest counsel of God,

> that law in the admirable frame whereof shineth with most perfect beauty the countenance of that wisdom which hath testified concerning herself. . .that law which has been the pattern to make and is the card to guide the world by; that law which hath been of God and with God everlastingly; that law the author and observer whereof is one only God to be blessed for ever--how should either man or angels be able perfectly to behold?[5]

We admire what of this we can apprehend, and the rest we humbly adore, confident that in spite of apparent confusion

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.2, p. 62. [2] Ibid., p. 64.

[3] Ibid., V.lxvii.12, in Works, II, 90.

[4] Ibid., "A Supplication to the Council by Master Walter Travers," p. 662.

[5] Laws, I.2, p. 63.

and disorder all is well because "ruled by so good a guide, as transgresseth not His own law, than which nothing can be more absolute, perfect, and just."[1]

In spite of this recognition of the depths which reason cannot sound, Hooker has confidence that it can find out much. No sound theologian, he believes, ever denied the will of God to be in part manifest by light of Nature. He sadly deprecates the fashion of scorning that light of nature.

> A number there are who think they cannot admire as they ought the power and authority of the word of God, if in things divine they should attribute any force to man's reason. For which cause they never use reason so willingly as to disgrace reason.[2]

All this is essential to Hooker's chief enterprise, the vindication of that rational organization and government of the church which he is defending against the radical Biblicism of the Puritans and sectaries. After all, if reason were of no use in understanding the things of God what would be the use of the argumentation of which the Puritans themselves were so enamoured?[3] Thus "injurious we are unto God, the author and giver of human capacity, judgment and wit, when because of some things wherein he precisely forbiddeth men to use their own inventions, we take occasion to disauthorize and disgrace the works which he doth produce by the hand

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.2, pp. 63 f.

[2] Ibid., III, 8, pp. 189 f.

[3] Ibid., pp. 199 f.

either of nature or of grace in them."[1] His principle is, then, that "the light of natural understanding, wit, and reason, is from God; He it is which thereby doth illuminate every man entering into the world."[2] Hooker is not enamoured of the doctrine of the depravity of man and the corruption of his reason; little mention is made of that topic. But he recognizes that the light of nature, reason, does need to be supplemented in order to grasp the higher truths of redemption. "As the light of nature doth cause the mind to apprehend those truths which are merely rational; so that saving truth, which is far above the reach of human reason, cannot otherwise, than by the Spirit of the Almighty, be conceived." Our very life as Christians is Christ, and we assent unto the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit within us.[3]

Just why it is that reason alone, used constructively and with sufficient care, is not sufficient to teach men all they need to know of God for their salvation is not made quite clear. There is nothing surprising in the assumption that men might not be able to understand all the reasons for God's operations in the world in view of their scope and scale. We can hardly expect to see that far beyond the little corner of things where we have been placed. But why it is that there are "supernatural" duties "which belong of necessity

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, VII, xi.10, Works, II, pp. 387 f.

[2] Laws, III.9, p. 204.

[3] Hooker, "A Learned Discourse of Justification," Works, II, 628.

to all, and yet could not have been known by any to belong unto them unless God had opened them Himself, inasmuch as they do not depend upon any natural ground at all out of which they may be deduced, but are appointed to God to supply the defect of those natural ways of salvation"[1] it is not entirely easy to see. We are prepared to find an almost deductive system in Hooker's doctrine; yet he is not primarily a rationalist but a reasonable empiricist. Practically speaking, he is concerned to justify both the Scriptures as the "oracles of God himself"[2] and the positive structure of ecclesiastical law and practice. He is therefore constrained to make such place as may be necessary for supra-rational divine legislation, whether it be the refusal of one tree to Adam, the prohibition of plowing with an ox and an ass yoked together, or the Elizabethan establishment which to his mind was virtually of divine ordination.[3] Furthermore, this limitation of the competence of reason is a way of emphasizing the free, voluntary, and personal character of God. At least a part of the reason for Moses' reporting the creation of the world in terms of simple fiat is "to teach that God did not work as a necessary but a voluntary agent, intending beforehand and decreeing with Himself that which did outwardly proceed from Him."[4]

Yet always this recognition is held within the framework of the idea that God works with essential order, with

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.15, pp. 119 f. [2] Ibid., III. 8, p. 198.

[3] Ibid., III.10, p. 205. [4] Ibid., I.3, p. 65.

rational order. He is always just, for example, but what can justice mean when it is not subject to any higher authority or power and so not under law? To this there would be "no answer at all, if we did hold as they do who peremptorily avouch that there is no manner why to be rendered of any thing which God doth, but only this, It was his absolute will to do it."[1] Hooker recognizes that there are many passages in the Bible which seem to suggest this idea. But on the other hand, if there is no answer except that God will have it so "then it seemeth that when the people do ask this question, in the fifth of Jeremy's prophecy, 'Wherefore hath the Lord our God done these things?' God should rather have closed up their mouths with sharp reproof for making any such demand, than have commanded the prophet to content and satisfy their minds by yielding a reason of his actions."[2] When examined, the most arbitrary sounding passages turn out to represent an exclusion of some one cause which we are especially apt to bring forth, wrongly, for the will of God, not to suggest the impossibility of any reason at all. For example, when we are blessed but see others unhappy

> we easily imagine that what we have more we are more worthy of than others are. To take down this proud opinion, it is so often inculcated, that whatsoever we have, the reason wherefore we have it is not our dignity, but his mercy; not the worthiness of our merit, but the goodness of his will. Yea, even in that very place where the blessed Apostle setteth down our predestination and adoption thorow Christ to have been according unto the

---

[1] Hooker, "A Learned Sermon of the Nature of Pride," Works, II, 722.

[2] Ibid., p. 723.

> pleasure of God's only will, doth not himself yield a cause of this will in God, by immediately adding, 'unto the praise of the glory of his grace'?[1]

It may be taken as certain that "God doth work nothing but for some end." This end, then, is the cause of what He does, and there is no reason to shrink from calling this end of his actions a law, which strictly requires "them to be such as always they are, so that if they were otherwise they could not be apt, correspondent, suitable unto their set and appointed end."[2] And what is this end toward which he works with such order and justice? This is the question to which an answer is provided by an inquiry into the goodness and perfection of God. Here it remains for us to note how balanced Hooker's doctrine of reason, law, and will turns out to be. God Himself works by counsel or reason; He has given His rational creatures a share in that light, and expects them to use it in discerning His will for them even in sacred matters. Even where positively given divine laws are revealed they usually supplement and often simply reinforce those laws which reason itself could discern.[3] Yet it is recognized also that reason cannot presume to sound all the depths of divine wisdom, nor can it hold itself to be finally competent to judge all of God's ways. "In matters which concern the actions of God, the most dutiful way on our part is to search what God hath done, and with meekness to admire that, rather

---

[1] Hooker, "A Learned Sermon of The Nature of Pride," Works, II, 723.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Hooker, Laws, I.12, p. 110.

than to dispute what He in congruity of reason ought to do."[1] In the light of so much evidence that God's ways are not only orderly but good, this restriction of the competence of reason is not a very heavy burden.

Divine Goodness

Since "God worketh nothing without cause" we are likely to find the best clue to His nature in an examination of the ends which determine His action. Hooker is very explicit here. "That and nothing else is done by God, which to leave undone were not so good."[2] It is the good at which He aims. But perhaps this is a tautology, for at least in the traditional philosophy good is definable in terms of its desirability.[3] Whatever one aims at is by virtue of that very fact a "good" to the one acting. Of course the desire of men might be misdirected and hence the judgment of goodness wrongly applied. But with God this could not happen, for what seems to Him good must, by virtue of His wisdom, be in fact really good. What, then, is the nature of the good at which God aims, the ends which form a law for His action?

> The general end of God's external working is the exercise of His most glorious and abundant virtue. . . .The Lord hath made all things for His own sake. Not that anything is made to be beneficial unto Him, but all things for Him to show beneficence and grace in them.[4]

A comparison of this idea that God's end is the ex-

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, III.11, p. 230.

[2] *Ibid.*, I.2, p. 62.

[3] *Ibid.*, I.8, pp. 79 f.

[4] *Ibid.*, I.2, pp. 62 f.

ercise of His virtue with the formula of Calvin and Zwingli, for example, that it is His glory through the display of all His perfections, shows a significant difference. It is not necessary that God produce a certain amount of evil in order to show off His righteousness by contrast. It would seem possible that the exercise of His goodness, His perfection and power, could take place by means of purposive moral action alone. At least Hooker never suggests that anything else is the case, or is required. It is above all "beneficence and grace" which constitute the divine virtue.

Divine Perfection

Elsewhere Hooker gives a more metaphysical picture of the divine goodness as embracing all values, not moral ones alone. God is, to begin with, actus purus. Unlike all other beings, He has no potentiality in Him. Thus He contains as an eternal possession all the possible perfections toward which every other thing strives, "all which perfections are contained under the general name of goodness."[1] The first degree of this general perfection is being itself, as is shown by the desire of all creatures to achieve a kind of vicarious eternity of existence through propagation of their kind. Another aspect of this general goodness is "the constancy and excellency of those operations which belong" unto each according to his kind. That is, the immutability and exactness of God are among His perfections in which all

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.5, p. 72.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

things seek to participate. Man likewise seeks to grow in knowledge of truth and in the exercise of moral virtue, aspiring in these regards to conformity with the goodness of God.[1]

The consummation of this aspiring of man, his desire to achieve that good which he perceives in God, is not attained on the level of merely civil or moral virtue, however. There is a depth in the perfections of God which draws us beyond every natural good to thirst after union with God Himself, as the fountain and sum of all good. To this union we cannot attain in this life, but we shall hereafter; yet the essential elements of that capability are ours even now.

> Capable we are of God, both by understanding and will: by understanding as He is that sovereign truth which comprehendeth the rich treasures of all wisdom; by will, as He is that sea of goodness whereof whoso tasteth shall thirst no more. . . .Whereas we now love the thing that is good, but good especially in respect of benefit unto us, we shall then love the thing that is good only or principally for the goodness of beauty in itself.[2]

The ultimate category for description of the divine goodness is, then, not a moral one but an aesthetic one, beauty, which it is the only adequate goal of human life to contemplate unbrokenly in rapt and passionate union. Here Hooker returns to the classical conception of the goal of the Christian life as the vision of God, and of God Himself as an undivided totality of all excellence.[3] And yet we must note that this

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.5, pp. 72 f.

[2] Ibid., I.11, p. 105.

[3] Ibid., p. 107. Cf. Kenneth E. Kirk, The Vision of God, The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum ("Bampton Lectures," 1928, 2d ed.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), passim.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

> [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

ultimately aesthetic or metaphysical conception of divine goodness is never allowed, in Hooker, to overwhelm its fundamental practical aspect, so far as our experience in this life is concerned--the moral aspects of perfect order, reason, justice, and mercy.

Divine Justice

As one might expect from understanding his general point of view, Hooker is particularly inclined to stress the excellence of justice, as being "that which God and angels and men are principally exalted by. . .that whereon not only all our present happiness, but in the kingdom of God our future joy dependeth."[1] But can man understand the justice of God? Is it not something different from that which we know by that name in our limited experience? No; Hooker believes that our common conscience is a safe guide even in these deep matters. "The general and perpetual voice of men is as the sentence of God himself. For that which all men have at all times learned, Nature herself must needs have taught; and God being the author of Nature, her voice is but His instrument."[2] We are, therefore, justified in expecting from God such justice as we expect from our fellows. To be sure, there is a fundamental difference in the case of God's justice to men, for "justice exhibiteth all good which congruity and right would have imparted unto equals, inferiors, or

---

[1] Hooker, "Sermon on Pride," Works, II, 714 f.

[2] Hooker, Laws, I.8, p. 81.

betters." But obviously we are not equal to God, let alone His superiors, and hence "at his hands we are to expect only that which justice yieldeth unto inferiors." This means that those who do wrong and remain impenitent are to expect from God exactly what convicted criminals are to look for from a human judge who "respecteth no man's person, standeth in awe of no man's countenance, hateth sin extremely, knoweth every action and circumstance of action that sinners do."[1] In this respect God's justice is a terrible thing; yet it is commensurate with the demands of our own consciences, and, as we shall see, is modified by mercy when mercy is asked.

But in a sense more positive than that of simply working retribution upon wrong-doers, God is just to men. Hooker recognizes the validity of the classical definition of Plato, in which justice is conceived in terms of giving unto each his due. What is due is, in turn, defined by means of "some received law," which may be either "natural and immutable, or else subject unto change, otherwise called positive law." Without some such reference to a due defined by law "neither God nor angels, nor men, could in any sense be termed just."[2] But even when all this is granted in principle Hooker recognizes "how hard it is oftentimes even for the wisest and skilfullest," to see what is justice and what is not.[3] So this is not a matter for quick or confident

---

[1] Hooker, "Sermon on Pride," Works, II, 724.

[2] Ibid., p. 716.

[3] Ibid., p. 720.

judgment, particularly when the working of God's deep will is concerned. Further, we must note that God cannot be held to an absolute equality in His dealing with His creatures, as if He were under necessity to impart good things only, and equally to all alike. For "then what creature would give him thanks, ever invocate, adore, and worship him?" He is free to "distribute his graces advisedly, knowing upon whom what and wherefore he doth bestow, this being the proper function of justice."[1] No justification is needed for this freedom, it being apparently the natural prerogative of a "superior." Hooker does deal at length, however, with the various complaints which are commonly directed against divine justice; and these we must consider shortly when we turn to the problem of evil.

Divine Mercy and Love

Although justice is an aspect of divine goodness most congenial to Hooker's temperament, he finds not only justice in God but abundant mercy and love as well. God is to be called Father, and this is a term of most pregnant meaning, for

> it is not with God as. . .with men, whose titles show rather what they should be than what they are. God will not be termed that...he is not. His name doth show his nature. Were not his affection most fatherly, the appellation of a Father would offend him. Fathers lay up treasure for their children: and shall not your heavenly Father provide sufficient for you? . . .Fathers spend out the day in travail, and continue the night in pensiveness, ever studying how to better their children's estate: and have the sons of God a father careless

---

[1] Hooker, "Sermon of Pride," Works, II, 722.

> whether they think [sink] or swim?. ...Fathers, if they be provoked unto anger, conceive not unappeasable wrath: do not the tears of their children confessing faults and craving pardon wring out oftentimes tears from their eyes? And, that which should cause even hearts of stone and iron to relent, we do not find God in Scripture so often rejoicing over the righteous as shedding forth tears of kindness in the bosom of sinners penitent. Thus God is righteous; and his righteousness thus he showeth.[1]

God's very nature it is to be generous with His children; "it is the glory of God to give;. . .his mercies in the current, through which they would pass, may be dried up, but at the head they never fail."[2]

We noted earlier that it is the perfection of God which is the power which draws men to union with Him, as the sum of all excellence. Although at times this perfection is, as we saw, characterized as "beauty," at other points Hooker explicitly identifies it with God's moral goodness, his mercy in particular.

> Our love and desire of union with God ariseth from the strong conceit which we have of his admirable goodness. . . .his mercy towards mankind, notwithstanding sin: for let it once sink deeply into the mind of men, that howsoever we have injuried God, his very nature is averse from revenge, except unto sin we add obstinacy; otherwise always ready to accept our submission as a full discharge or recompense for all wrongs; and can we choose but begin to love him whom we have offended? or can we but begin to grieve that we have offended him whom we now love?[3]

The true righteousness of God, then, is injured and misconceived by any legalism which insists that no matter

---

[1] Hooker, "Sermon of Pride," Works, II, 725 f.

[2] Hooker, "A Sermon Found among the Papers of Bishop Andrews," Works, II, 799.

[3] Hooker, Laws, VI.iii.3, Works, II, p. 242.

how merciful God is said to be in pardoning and forgiving sin, yet "so unappeasable is the rigiour and dirity of his corrective justice, that till transgressors have endured, either in this world or another, vexation proportionable unto the pleasure which they have taken in doing evil, there is no possible rest for their souls."[1] Here Hooker stands on common ground with all the Reformers in insisting upon grace and mercy as central in God.[2] Yet he will not deny the goodness of God to those who have in good faith believed in Christ, even while holding the erroneous doctrine of Rome. "I may, I trust without offence, persuade myself, that thousands of our fathers in former times, living and dying within her walls, have found mercy at the hands of God."[3] At the same time he is not ready to admit that the righteous among the Gentiles who never heard the name of Christ yet held the foundation of Christianity, which is faith in him.[4]

The Rule of God

Providence

Since he sees the will of God as conformed to a law of His own being and all the levels of created reality from angels to stones likewise acting by laws which come from Him, it is clear that for Hooker the exercise of divine providence

---

[1] Hooker, "Sermon of Pride," Works, II, 735.

[2] Hooker, "A Learned Discourse of Justification, Works, etc.," Works, II, 601 ff., is a strong statement of this position.

[3] Ibid., p. 617.

[4] Ibid., pp. 625 f.

in the government of the world will be to some extent a thing of settled order and of second causes rather than simply of direct divine volitions, as the Reformers tended to think along with Duns Scotus and other voluntaristic teachers of the medieval period. The hierarchy of orderly action is succinctly described by Hooker in these terms:

> The rule of divine operations outward is the definite appointment of God's own wisdom set down within Himself. The rule of natural agents that work by simple necessity is the determination of the wisdom of God known to God himself, the principal director of them. . . .The rule of natural agents which work after a sort of their own accord as the beasts do, is the judgment of common sense or fancy concerning the sensible goodness of those objects wherewith they are moved. The rule of ghostly or immaterial natures, as spirits and angels, is their intuitive intellectual judgment concerning the amiable beauty and high goodness of that object, which with unspeakable joy and delight doth set them on work. The rule of voluntary agents on earth is the sentence that reason giveth concerning the goodness of those things which they are to do.[1]

Here it is to be noted that God is the "principal director" of inanimate objects which work "by necessity." "Nature, therefore, is nothing else but God's instrument," executing by the power of the spirit of God that law which is written in the divine bosom itself.[2] To be sure, it appears as if each natural entity were exactly imitating a pattern subsisting in God; but in fact they all operate blindly and are simply guided by the finger of God.[3] The apparent slight swervings or irregularities discerned in the course of nature by the ancients and by them attributed to

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.8, pp. 81 f.

[2] Ibid., I.3, p. 68.

[3] Ibid., p. 67.

the refractoriness of the "material" cause which has power to resist God, are not to be understood thus. Rather, their imperfect action is due to the curse laid upon the creation because of sin.[1] Since all inanimate nature thus directly expresses the "settled stability of Divine understanding" which appoints the course of all natural objects it is rightly said to be under the rule of "Providence."

On the other hand, there is a measure of real freedom in the higher levels of nature. With animals it "is the judgment of common sense or fancy concerning the sensible goodness of those objects wherewith they are moved." Man has an even higher privilege.

> Man in perfection of nature, being made according to the likeness of his maker, resembleth Him also in the manner of working; so that whatsoever we work as men, the same we do wittingly work and freely; neither are we according to the manner of natural agents any way so tied, but that it is in our power to leave the things we do undone . . . .To choose is to will one thing before another, and to will is to bend our souls to the having or doing of that which they see to be good. Goodness is seen with the eye of the understanding, and the light of that eye is reason. So that two principal fountains there are of human action, knowledge and will, which will in things tending towards any end is termed choice.[2]

Then finally, with spirits and angels it is "their intuitive intellectual judgment concerning the amiable beauty and high goodness of that object, which with unspeakable joy and delight doth set them on work."[3] God rules, then, and yet His rule over self-moving creatures and particularly intellectual ones is not that of mere "efficiency," of compulsion or

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.3, pp. 66 f.

[2] Ibid., I.7, pp. 75 f.

[3] Ibid., I.8, p. 82.

necessity, but rather that of the persuasion of goodness.[1] "If, therefore, it be demanded why God, having power and ability infinite, the effects notwithstanding of that power are all finite" and exhibit some apparent imperfection, the answer is to be found in large part in this postulate of intellectual freedom. This in turn must be taken in conjunction with Hooker's basic insight concerning "the end which He hath proposed, and the law whereby His wisdom hath stinted the effects of His power in such sort that it doth not work infinitely but correspondently unto that end for which it worketh, even all things. . .in most decent and comely sort, all things in measure, number and weight."[2]

When in reference to the course of human history Hooker affirms that "all powers are of God," he means in the final analysis not that God is directly and specifically the only power or energy at work. Sometimes He institutes "powers," but He also sometimes allows them to be by "permission." In this sense, then, power is

> of divine institution, when either God himself doth deliver, or men by light of nature find out the kind thereof. So that the power of parents over children, and of husbands over their wives, the power of all sorts of superiors, made by consent of commonwealths within themselves, or grown from agreement amongst nations, such power is of God's own institution in respect of the kind thereof.[3]

In sum, the rule of God is postulated, not in the sense of His being the Sole Cause as other Protestant teach-

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.4, p. 70. [2] Ibid., I.2, p. 62.

[3] Hooker, "Supposed Fragment of a Sermon on Civil Obedience," Works, II, 585.

ers tended to maintain but through orderly processes in which all authority finally comes to rest in His hands. He is, in this sense, responsible for all that occurs, but through means which His wisdom finds suitable. In short, "God will not have great things brought to pass, either altogether without means, or by those means altogether which are to our seeming probable and likely." Thus He prevents on the one hand mere idle repose upon His bounty, and on the other hand, an undue confidence in and thankfulness to the mere means worked out by our own wisdom and skill.[1]

Predestination

Hooker stood near enough to the tidal current of Reformation thought to find the concept of God's election a highly significant one.[2] He believed in election, but not as those did who taught an arbitrary selection of one for salvation and of another for damnation. In his first important public sermon he declared that there are two wills in God; two wills very different, however, from those affirmed by Luther or Calvin. The first will, which is antecedent and without exception, is that "all mankind should be saved." The second, which is consequent and thus dependent on the choice of the creature, "was, That those only should be saved, that did live answerable to that degree of grace which He

---

[1] Hooker, "Sermon found among the Papers of Bishop Andrews," Works, II, 798 f.

[2] Cf. "A Learned and Comfortable Sermon of the Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect," Works, II, 587, passim.

had offered or afforded them."[1] Any other view would, according to Hooker's admirer Izaak Walton, intrench "upon the honour and justice of our merciful God,"[2] and doubtless this was Hooker's opinion. Hooker was constrained to believe that justifying faith is a gift of God; is, in fact, the gift of Christ dwelling within man. And this gift is indefectible; for did not Christ say "I am with you to the world's end?"[3] Why this gift should be given to some and not to others he does not examine. Presumably, on the lines of his general principles he would refer the discrimination to some combination of the depths of the wisdom of God and of human freedom to reject or accept. At any rate, an absolute decree of reprobation is explicitly ruled out: "These not weighing how opposite it is to the justice of God either actually to condemn, or in purpose to determine condemnation, without a cause thereof presupposed in the party so condemned, have by misconstruction of some Scripture sentences with no small hazard, as well of God's honour as men's comfort, over-easily been led to define that so many were fore-appointed unto endless torments, only for that the will of God was to have them endlessly tormented."[4] It is, of course, doubtful that any predestinarian thinker would have phrased the reason for reprobation so baldly, as merely being God's will to have some men tormented. The negative decree was always made

---

[1] Walton, p. 161. [2] Ibid.

[3] Hooker, "Sermon of Pride," Works, II, 629.

[4] Ibid., p. 726.

correspondent to some actual wickedness in men which was called the real ground of their condemnation. But the very fact that Hooker, who knew Calvin well and was in most things very "judicious," would so distort this doctrine shows with what repugnance he regarded the logic which lurked below whatever reasonable surface could be put upon it.

In his controversy with Travers, Hooker stated his own thought thus: first, God is only a permissive and not a positive cause of sin; second, the will of God for the elect is not absolute but conditional, "to save his elect believing, fearing, and obediently serving him"; and finally, that the reprobate are not rejected "without a foreseen worthiness of rejection going though not in time yet in order before."[1] This unworthiness is, however, explicitly connected with the general corruption of fallen man which makes each of us worthy to feel everlasting flames but from which the divine mercy has redeemed some.

To sum up, Hooker is somewhat more judicious than logical in his doctrine of predestination. God wills the salvation of all men, yet effectively gives the spirit of adoption only conditionally to those who continue in serving Him; but still, those in whom Christ once lives cannot fall from grace. And whereas God's election of some to salvation is based upon the logically prior foreknowledge of their worthiness, and the rejection of others upon their fitness for

---

[1] Hooker, "Answer to the Supplication that Mr. Travers made to the Council," Works, II, 691.

rejection, yet all are equally corrupt in His sight, in and of themselves! Clinging to the language of election and the priority of grace, Hooker yet will not let go the humanly appreciated righteousness and justice of God; and so trying to carry water on both shoulders his doctrine staggers a bit.

The Problem of Evil

Holding firmly, as we have seen, to strong views of the goodness, justice, and reasonableness of God, Hooker could not avoid a considerable interest in the problem raised by the actual presence of so much evil in the world. How could he reconcile his faith with that fact? Particularly in his elaborate "Sermon of the Nature of Pride" he gives us a full-dress treatment of this theme.[1]

First he sets forth with considerable care the usual objections to the divine government which concern the unequal dispensation of good and evil in temporal fortunes, especially where the good seem to suffer more than the evil and to be less prosperous. All this seems very strange, particularly in view of the Scripture promises that the good shall prosper. His answer begins with pointing out that we do not expect that in *every* respect the good must be more blessed than the evil--i.e., that saints must be beautiful, strong, healthy, prolific and the like. "God is by nature good and gracious unto all the works of his hands," and it would be wrong of us to wish them denied all participation in the fa-

---

[1] Hooker, *Works*, II, 696 ff.

vors of God. This is especially evident in the fact that it is morally impossible that the real blessings of the good could be imparted to those who are bad. The estate of just men, those of uprightness and integrity, is "by infinite degrees happier than the wicked's in their chiefest ruff."[1]

Furthermore, the apparently indiscriminate allotment of pain and hardship is only outwardly so, and not in fact. For

> the end of God is never the same in both, howsoever upon both he seemeth to lay the same burthens. But being both in the same furnace, the one are as stubble, the other as gold: being stricken by the same rod, the one receive the torment of a judge, the other the chastisement of a father: though both seem equally forsaken, they are never equally forsaken; but the one by dereliction of probation only, the other by dereliction of reprobation.[2]

In short, it is as the saints themselves testify, that "the evils which they suffer to be rather seals assuring them of everlasting bliss, than tokens arguing unto others, that God doth put no difference between them and the children of malediction."[3] The blessings promised to the good are always with the condition: unless it be better otherwise. And experience teaches clearly how beneficial adversities often are. "Affliction is both a medicine if we sin, and a preservative that we sin not." The great thing is patience, to let the good issue which God purposes to bring out of temporary misfortune appear.[4]

---

[1] Hooker, Works, II, 731.

[2] Ibid., p. 732.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., pp. 733 f.

Conclusions

The deep devotion of Hooker found its expression through participation in the rich corporate life and liturgy of that branch of the catholic church into which he was born; and his piety in contemplation of the supernatural beauty and order of a world of spirits and nature ruled by the unfailing wisdom and power of a God to whom His own moral perfection was the law of His being and of His action. In such a mind there could arise no stormy doubts of the goodness of God, for that received constant testimony from all the movements of creation. Depths and mysteries there were, to be sure, past finding out by the limited light of reason given unto man. Yet Hooker's confidence that the utmost depth of mystery could hold no truth about God which was not a vindication of the orderly goodness displayed in His creation never faltered. Quiet, gentle, regular, wise, sensitive himself, Hooker envisaged a God in his own image, except for the addition of a metaphysical glory and perfection which it is the ultimate end of man to see clearly. Above all, it was in the concept of law, of pervasive and beneficent order, that he found the bond by which to grapple perfect moral goodness with God's perfection of metaphysical being in an unbreakable bond of unity.

CHAPTER VI

JOHN WESLEY

Page

The Man and His Thought 233

The Goodness of God 235

- God as Loving 235
- The Justice of God 238
- Justification 240
- God and Moral Norms 242

The Greatness of God 244

- Divine Depth and Mystery 244
  - The place of reason
- God's Will and Its Freedom 250
- Divine Power 254

Three Critical Doctrines 256

- Predestination 256
  - The necessity of grace
  - Election
  - Reprobation
- Providence 264
  - Human freedom
  - Divine government
- The Problem of Evil 269

Conclusions 272

CHAPTER VI

JOHN WESLEY

The Man and His Thought

In Anglo-Saxon countries there is no need to expound the importance of John Wesley's work. This is evident in the Methodist churches which constitute so prominent a feature of the landscape, as well as in more intangible phenomena, such as the Rise, Decline and Fall of the Eighteenth Amendment and the emergence of characteristic features of Methodist organization and polity in other churches.[1] This importance is not as evident in Teutonic countries where so much Protestant theology is written; and the consequent fashion of dismissing Wesley as a theologian, even while recognizing his importance as a churchman, has been all too common even in the Anglo-Saxon Methodist homeland.[2]

For the purposes of this study, however, Wesley is

---

[1] Pres. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, Jr., once discussed with a group at Pacific School of Religion the ecclesiastical importance of the Methodist district superintendency, pointing out its reflection in the evolution of American Congregational state superintendents and in the organization of other churches.

[2] Cf. William Ragsdale Cannon, The Theology of John Wesley, With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 7; George Croft Cell, The Rediscovery of John Wesley (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935), p. 1. An elaborate study is found in Maximin Piette, John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism, trans. J. B. Howard (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937), pp. 412-453 and passim.

exceptionally significant. There are many disagreements on the precise character of Wesley's theology as a whole. Some contend for an essentially Arminian-Anglican or even a kind of "humanist" interpretation. Others stress Wesley's theocentrism and seek to assimilate his teaching to the Augustinian-Reformation tradition. Others find in perfectionism or the doctrine of sanctification the central clue to his thought and its significance.[1] These controversies mingle with differences of opinion about Wesley's conversion, its meaning and bearing and even its proper date.[2]

And yet the main points of his teaching are quite clear, both because he expressed himself with precision and because he thought directly, clearly, and candidly. Particularly on the question of God's moral attributes the record makes his position unmistakable. That position has special importance, not only because it so unequivocally affirms the goodness of God, but because it is so firmly rooted in Wesley's own experience and that of thousands of his preachers and converts. It is fairly well agreed that in spite of his intense Biblicism Wesley was essentially a theologian of experience, a pragmatic thinker who insisted upon practice of what he preached and upon preaching what he thought the

---

[1] A convenient summary of these interpretations is given by Harald Lindström, Wesley and Sanctification, A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation (Stockholm: Nya Bokförlags Aktiebolaget, 1946), pp. 1-16.

[2] See the discussions in Cell, chap. vii; Piette, pp. 238-315; Cannon, chaps. ii-iii; Umphrey Lee, John Wesley and Modern Religion (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1936), chap. v.

religious experience and practice of Christians showed to be true.[1] As our historical analysis began with the tremendous religious existentialism of Luther, so it returns, with this last thinker, to another thoroughly existential exposition of the Christian doctrine of God.

The Goodness of God

God as Loving

Few theologians before this century have been as willing as Wesley to stand squarely upon the New Testament affirmation that God is love. This, he says, is "that attribute which God peculiarly claims, wherein he glories above all the rest." Nor is he willing simply to allow this idea to take a coordinate place along with other descriptions of God's goodness. It is central.

> It is not written, "God is justice," or "God is truth:" (Although he is just and true in all his ways:)"but it is written, "God is love," love in the abstract, without bounds; and "there is no end of his goodness." His love extends even to those who neither love nor fear him. He is good, even to the evil and the unthankful; yea, without any exception or limitation, to all the children of men.[2]

This is the "whole scope and tenor of Scripture," which nothing can be allowed to contradict.[3]

It is from this nature in God that man's worship and service of Him derives its proper character. Wesley never scrupled to define true religion in terms of love. He as-

---

[1] Lee, pp. 136 ff.; Lindström, pp. 2 ff.; cf. the weight Wesley laid on the testimonies of those who _felt_ themselves perfected in Christian love; _Works_, XI, 398, 411.

[2] Wesley, _Works_, X, 227.

[3] _Ibid_., VII, 380.

serted that the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians "contained the whole of true religion."[1] And in further expounding this theme he concluded that although the whole "world votes on the other side. . .true religion, in the very essence of it, is nothing short of holy tempers."[2] What he meant by "holy tempers" is abundantly attested in the following sermon where he wrote:

> Be more zealous still for holy tempers, for longsuffering, gentleness, meekness, lowliness, and resignation: But be most zealous of all for love, the queen of all graces, the highest perfection in earth or heaven, the very image of the invisible God, as in men below, so in angels above. For "God is love."[3]

Methodism, Wesley liked to say, was only "the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England." And this old religion is "no other than love, the love of God and of all mankind."[4] Methodists, Wesley says elsewhere, are a people "who place religion in an uniform resemblance of the great object of it; in a steady imitation of Him they worship, in all his inimitable perfections; more particularly, in justice, mercy, and truth, or universal love filling the heart, and governing the life."[5] The function of such true religion is "the restoration of the image of God, pure love, in every child of man."[6] This theme is further elaborated in a sermon on "The New Birth":

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VII, 46.

[2] Ibid., p. 56.

[3] Ibid., pp. 66 f.

[4] Ibid., p. 423.

[5] Ibid., VIII, 352.

[6] Ibid., VII, 430.

> "So God created man in his own image". . . .Not barely in his natural image, a picture of his own immortality; a spiritual being, endued with understanding, freedom of will, and various affections;--nor merely in his political image, the governor of this lower world. . . .--but chiefly in his moral image; which, according to the Apostle, is "righteousness, and true holiness". . . . "God is love:" Accordingly man at his creation was full of love; which was the sole principle of all his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions. God is full of justice, mercy, and truth; so was man as he came from the hands of his Creator.[1]

Even the law, which to Luther was so formidable a witness to a dreadful and wrathful aspect in God, was for Wesley simply another proof of divine love. "This law, which the goodness of God gave at first, and has preserved through all ages, is, like the fountain from whence it springs, full of goodness and benignity; it is mild and kind." From this law comes a "peace which passeth all understanding" and causes the Christian to "rejoice evermore, in the testimony of a good conscience toward God."[2] It was on this very point that Wesley delivered one of his few strong criticisms of Luther. "Who art thou, then, O man, that 'judgest the law. . .'--that rankest it with sin, Satan, and death, and sendest them all to hell together?"[3] This, Wesley felt, was intolerable, not only for its antinomian implications but for its suggestion that God, as the fountain of all law, is not purely good and loving.

God does not even cause spiritual desolations by his "bare, arbitrary, sovereign will." "His invariable will is

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 66; cf. ibid., V, 54.

[2] Ibid., p. 442.

[3] Ibid., p. 445.

our sanctification, attended with 'peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost'. . . . He never deserts us, as some speak; it is we only that desert him."[1]

The Justice of God

Wesley saw the activity of God in a two-fold character. He is Creator and Governor, and the implications of these two roles are diverse. As Creator God is not bound by "justice," since "nothing is due to what has no being." Accordingly, "he created the heavens and the earth, and all things that are therein, in every conceivable respect, 'according to his own good pleasure.'" This means that he was entirely free to allot to each individual all the circumstances of his birth and life: a weak or strong body, feeble or able mind, and the like. We cannot say just how far this freedom of disposition extends, though ultimately even this is bounded:

> We are sure the difference cannot be so great, as to necessitate one to be good, or the other to be evil; to force one into everlasting glory, or the other into everlasting burnings. This cannot be, because it would suppose the character of God as a Creator, to interfere with God as a Governor; wherein he does not, cannot possibly, act according to his own mere sovereign will; but, as he has expressly told us, according to the invariable rules both of justice and mercy.[2]

This, then, is the great principle: whenever "God acts as a Governor, as a rewarder, or punisher, he no longer acts as mere Sovereign, by his own sole will and pleasure; but as an impartial Judge, guided in all things by invariable

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 80.

[2] Ibid., X, 361 f.

justice." To this Wesley will admit one exception, and only one. God may sometimes let mercy triumph over this justice, but "severity never does." He may reward more, but cannot punish more, than strict justice requires. He may even act irresistibly to convert men--although even then the individual can either improve God's gift or nullify it--but he cannot drive men to destruction unjustly.[1] The notion of "sovereignty," the power of the potter over the clay, does not make it just for God to condemn any arbitrarily. He may set His own terms for salvation and demand that men abide by them. All men must recognize that this is just. But the sovereignty of God can never be brought to supersede His justice, as a purely arbitrary condemnation would imply.[2]

This does not mean, of course, that God is "soft" or incapable of punishing. Wesley produced some terrible passages of denunciation and warning. Of the impenitent sinner, he says: "He at last sees the loving, the merciful God. . . is a just God and a terrible, rendering to every man according to his works, entering into judgment with the ungodly for every idle word, yea, and for the imaginations of the heart."[3] But even here we are not to imagine bare, cold justice as the last word; for His justice can never be divided, "no, not for a moment," from His other attributes and "from His mercy in particular."[4]

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 362 f. [2] Ibid., p. 217.

[3] Ibid., V, 102. [4] Ibid., X, 217.

Justification

A recent student of Wesley has declared that "Wesley's doctrine of justification was the source and determinant of all the rest of his theology."[1] Cannon goes on to assert that with Wesley justification must be understood as the gate to true religion, i.e., the beginning of sanctification, of that kind of perfect life in love which we have already seen that he ascribes, somewhat hopefully perhaps, to the "true Methodist." Valid though this may be, however, Wesley himself still insisted upon a sharp distinction between the two terms and the realities to which they point. His judgment was that none "has wrote more ably than Martin Luther on justification by faith alone," but that the Reformer's notions of sanctification were hopelessly deficient and confused.[2] Against other views on justification he could be very strong. For example, he found "a wide difference between Quakerism and Christianity" because the former teaches justification by works. This, he believed, sprang from confusing justification with sanctification.[3]

His own view is clear enough. If justification is not "being made actually just and righteous," neither is it "the clearing us from accusation, particularly that of Satan," nor of the law. Least of all does it mean that God is "deceived in those whom he justifies, that he thinks them to

---

[1] Cannon, p. 244. [2] Wesley, Works, VII, 204.

[3] Ibid., X, 179.

be what, in fact, they are not." "The judgment of the all-wise God is always according to truth." Justification in the plain scriptural sense is simply "pardon, the forgiveness of sins." This is given for the sake of "the propitiation made by the blood of" Christ.[1] Now the exact bearing of this word propitiation is not entirely easy to fix. Cannon points out that "there is in all of Wesley's writings no single work on the atonement, and there is no reason whatever for us to believe that he had any clear, well-thought-out theory of the meaning of Christ's death."[2] However, it does seem that insofar as he reflected on the problem at all he accepted the Anselmic-Calvinist transactional theory, whereby the death of Christ constitutes a satisfaction of the claims of justice and allows God in "equity to cancel the bond and to consign over the purchased possession."[3]

Whatever one's judgment of this theory of the atonement, it clearly is an attempt to maintain the justice of God. And Wesley underlines that concern by his insistence that justification does not mean that God violates the truth of things in considering us just when we are not. He simply forgives, out of love, as that mercy is justified by the atonement of Christ. The depth of His mercy is brought out by the Wesleyan insistence that Christ's work is for all, not just for a few elect souls, and that it requires no human

---

[1] Wesley, Works, V, 56 f. [2] Cannon, p. 208.

[3] Cannon, p. 210, quoting Wesley, Notes on the New Testament, p. 631.

works at all "but only, to believe in Him who, for the sake of his Son, and the propitiation which he hath made, 'justifieth the ungodly that worketh not'."[1]

God and Moral Norms

When Wesley begins to deal with the question of moral norms, that is, the notion of universal moral law, his speech takes on the accents of Hooker himself; and indeed, it is difficult to believe that Wesley was not consciously or unconsciously speaking in the tradition of Anglican moral rationalism. God gave the law, in the first instance, to the angels, "a complete model of all truth, so far as is intelligible to a finite being; and of all good" so far as their minds could embrace it. Then when man appeared, He "gave to this free, intelligent creature, the same law as to his first-born children," written not on stone but "engraven on his heart by the finger of God."[2]

> This law is an incorruptible picture of the High and Holy ONE that inhabiteth eternity. It is He whom, in his essence, no man hath seen or can see, made visible to men and angels. It is the face of God unveiled. . . .it is the heart of God disclosed to man. . . .It is. . .the streaming forth, or out-beaming, of his glory, the express image of his person.[3]

Viewed in more intellectual terms, the law is "divine virtue and wisdom assuming a visible form;" "the original ideas of truth and good, which were lodged in the uncreated mind from eternity;" "supreme, unchangeable reason; it

---

[1] Wesley, Works, V, 69. [2] Ibid., pp. 435 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 438.

is unalterable rectitude; it is the everlasting fitness of all things." Thus it is "a copy of the eternal mind, a transcript of the divine nature."[1] It would be difficult to find more fulsome terms in which to express the validity of those moral norms which the mind and conscience of man apprehend; and it would be impossible to connect them more intimately and essentially with the divine nature.

The practical workings of this emphasis upon the validity of moral norms, of the moral law, are visible in such a fact as Wesley's change of attitude regarding good works before justification. He had once denied their value, quite in the spirit of Article XIII of the Church of England: "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God";[2] later when he came to prepare "Articles of Religion" for the American Methodists, he omitted this paragraph.[3] Such a statement was not in accord "with the fitness of things."[4] In the same spirit he replied to the argument that Negro slavery was authorized by law.

> Can law, human law, change the nature of things? Can it turn darkness into light, or evil into good. . . .Notwithstanding ten thousand laws, right is right, and wrong is wrong still. There must still remain an essential difference between justice and injustice, cruelty and mercy."[5]

---

[1] Wesley, Works, V, 438 f. [2] Schaff, Creeds, III, 495.

[3] Lee, p. 171. Cf. Wesley, Works, V, 59 f.

[4] It is also true that Wesley believed there is no time when men are entirely without the inspiration of the Spirit, which may partly account for the change. See the discussion of grace, infra.

[5] Wesley, Works, XI, 70.

Wesley would have argued that ultimately those differences are rooted in the nature and will of God; but that he chose the language not of arbitrary command but of unchangeable moral norms is not without significance.

The Greatness of God

Divine Depth and Mystery

For all his insistence upon the moral goodness of God, Wesley never intended to allow that essential idea to render questionable His greatness and glory. He particularly objected to "every fondling expression" applied to Christ, as equal in glory with God. He disliked the use of "dear" Lord; and doubted that refraining from it would check any legitimate devotion though it might hinder some of the "holy roller" antics from which Methodist meetings were not as free then as they are now.[1]

With his intensely Biblical and practical mode of thinking Wesley did not spend much time elaborating in a speculative way the metaphysical attributes of greatness as traditionally conceived. At times he simply echoed the regular theological terminology. For example, "the almighty, all-wise God sees and knows, from everlasting to everlasting, all that is, that was, and that is to come, through one eternal now." He is thus eternal and immutable in his knowing, and when the Bible speaks of God's purpose, plan, or foreknowledge, this is only a concession to our limited intellects.

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VII, 293 ff.

Learning these things we should "not endeavour to wade into those mysteries which are too deep for angels to fathom!"[1] In similar fashion he speaks of the eternity, omnipotence, omnipresence, unity, etc. of God, all of which call rather for our reverent adoration than presumptuous attempts at understanding.[2] Likewise he speaks of the unchangeableness of God. Yet he insists that this must be properly understood, so as to bring out clearly its moral significance. God is unchangeable as to His decree concerning the conditions for salvation, namely, faith. He is also unchangeable in His love and hatred, but these are directed not to individuals but to principles. That is, He loves righteousness and hates iniquity. This means, to be sure, that He hates the wicked and loves the righteous, but only as a consequence of His fundamental moral discrimination.[3]

In an eloquent sermon on "The Imperfection of Human Knowledge" Wesley develops at length the theme of the depth and mystery of God's power and purpose. He points out that there is no innate idea of God stamped on the human soul, but that rather "the little which we do know of God, (except what we receive by the inspiration of the Holy One,) we do not gather from any inward impression, but gradually acquire from without. . . .from what he hath written in all his works."[4] That we know so little of God is not surprising in view of how little we know even ourselves. What is the soul?

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 230.

[2] Cannon, p. 169.

[3] Wesley, Works, X, 237 f.

[4] Ibid., VI, 339.

Where is it lodged? How united to the body?[1] And when we consider the baffling mysteries of God's providential government, how much more inadequate our understanding appears. Why has not Christianity spread as far as sin? Why is it "that so vast a majority of mankind are, so far as we can judge, cut off from all means, all possibility of holiness, even from their mother's womb?" This might easily be improved into an objection against all religion. But we must simply resolve "all into the unsearchable wisdom of God; together with a deep conviction of our own ignorance, and inability to fathom his counsels." But one certainty does remain: these differences among men "cannot possibly be owing to any absolute decree, consigning one, before he was born to everlasting glory, and the other to everlasting fire."[2] That is, amid all the intellectual uncertainty and the depth of the divine mystery the moral absolute stands. This being the case, it does not ultimately matter that we cannot understand "any one attribute, not any one circumstance, of the divine nature."[3]

The place of reason.--Of the five theologians studied in this essay Wesley, along with Hooker, is doubtless the most reasonable, the most concerned to use logic carefully and to elaborate his doctrine of God in terms of general rational persuasiveness. This does not mean, as we have just seen and shall shortly note again, that he attempted to take

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 343. [2] Ibid., pp. 347 ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 2.

the mystery out of God. Rather, he wanted to use reason to the full as far as it would take him--which was quite a long way--and beyond that, he was confident that a genuine revelation of God would not fundamentally contradict or destroy reason even though it might transcend it. He had had long years of the practice of logic in his time as Fellow of Lincoln at Oxford, and he was always critical of attempts to discredit that discipline, even on the part of so admired a man as Locke.[1] Against the Quakers he argued that "God moves man whom he has made a reasonable creature, according to the reason which he has given him. . . .by his understanding, as well as his affections."[2] Thus the operations of the Spirit are not confined to impulses or desires, but are equally present in rational convictions concerning our course of action.[3]

Indeed, this gift is a means to lift us to God Himself. The desire of knowledge is a universal principle, constant and insatiable.

> And it is planted in every human soul for excellent purposes. It is intended to hinder our taking up our rest in anything here below; to raise our thoughts to higher and higher objects, more and more worthy our consideration, till we ascend to the Source of all knowledge and all excellence, the all-wise and all-gracious Creator.[4]

Thus Wesley strongly counsels those who under-value reason, "Never more declaim in that wild, loose, ranting manner,

---

[1] Wesley, Works, XIII, 421. Wesley's delicate perception of the meaning of terms stood him in good stead in controversy; as when he noted with glee two treatises written against him, "the former entitled, 'The Notions of the Methodists fully disproved;' the second, 'The Notions of the Methodists farther disproved'"! Works, VIII, 49 f.

[2] Ibid., X, 181. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., VI, 337.

against this precious gift of God." No service is done Him by trying to exclude reason from religion.

Yet in this same sermon on "The Case of Reason Considered," Wesley goes on to point out the other side of the case. Having employed reason as far as it will go, we must then recognize its limits. "It is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love; and consequently, of producing either real virtue, or substantial happiness." These must come from a higher Source, as a gift of God Himself.[1] "Many years ago I found the truth of this by sad experience," he relates, and goes on to tell of his own intellectual wrestling, and of his failures to find in rational arguments that certainty of faith which he needed for life itself.[2] Beyond the outward senses, from which come all the materials which natural reason works upon, one must be given "internal senses."

> Till the eyes of your understanding are opened, you can have no apprehension of divine things, no idea of them at all. Nor, consequently, till then, can you either judge truly, or reason justly, concerning them; seeing your reason has no ground whereon to stand, no materials to work upon.[3]

The basis of this argument is Locke's demonstration that the mind has no innate ideas but that all come either from sensation or reflection, a point of view which Wesley accepted.[4] This he explicitly applied to spiritual things:

Seeing our ideas are not innate, but must all originally

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 359 f.

[2] Ibid., p. 356.

[3] Ibid., VIII, 13.

[4] Ibid., XIII, 417.

> come from our senses, it is certainly necessary that you have senses capable of discerning objects of this kind: Not those only which are called natural senses, which in this respect profit nothing. . . but spiritual senses, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil.[1]

Granted this spiritual discernment to work with, reason is able to get over the immense chasm between the things of sense and of spirit. "Then upborne, as it were, on eagles' wings, you shall soar away into the regions of eternity; and your enlightened reason shall explore even 'the deep things of God.'"[2] For Wesley this did not mean that the rationalistic and speculative development of theology was a highly significant goal. He always insisted "that orthodoxy, or right opinions, is, at best, but a very slender part of religion, if it can be allowed to be any part of it at all."[3] Wesley was genuinely concerned for religious truth, as the Minutes of interminable discussions with his preachers abun-

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VIII, 13 f.

[2] The similarity at this point between Wesley and Jonathan Edwards, his contemporary whose Northampton revival he admired greatly (Wesley, Works, VII, 410), is very striking. This passage and the sermon on "The Witness of the Spirit" are almost identical in outlook with the great treatise of Edwards on "Religious Affections." The same Lockeian psychology underlies both treatments. Both men are a combination of rationalist and mystic, both great preachers who had enormous power to move people. The decisive difference was their attitude toward the Newtonian determinism. Acceptance of this led to the profound and absolute predestinarian doctrine of Edwards; its rejection made Wesley the greatest modern theologian of freedom. Certainly a major cause for this divergence was Wesley's decision to make the moral norms for God decisive, whereas for Edwards it was the metaphysical factor of omnicausality and Total Being. Cf. Lee, p. 127; Miller, Edwards, pp. 71 ff.; infra, section on Providence.

[3] Wesley, Works, VIII, 249.

dantly testify.[1] But he wanted it to be anchored solidly to reality and particularly to *moral* experience. Thus it was that he preferred the moralism of Pelagius to the orthodoxy of St. Augustine himself: "(A wonderful saint! As full of pride, passion, bitterness, censoriousness, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him as George Fox himself.)"[2] Along with reason Wesley affirmed conscience to be a faculty of the soul which, helped by God, is able to see our own tempers and life, the rule by which we are to be directed, and a knowledge of our agreement or disagreement therewith. This rule is not speculatively discerned. Rather it is "the written word of God." But there is a kind of moral insight which enables us to use that word aright.[3]

In sum, it is a combination of religious intuition, moral intuition, firm Biblicism and a generous trust in reason which Wesley offers as the way to the understanding of spiritual things, and of the nature of God Himself.[4]

God's Will and Its Freedom

No doctrine has been more beloved by those concerned to maintain the metaphysical glory of God than that of divine freedom, or sovereignty. Wesley, too, lays considerable emphasis upon this idea. As we noted earlier, he maintained that as Creator God is absolutely free in fixing all the

---

[1] Wesley, *Works*, VIII, 275 ff. [2] *Ibid.*, VI, 328.

[3] *Ibid.*, VII, 189 f.

[4] Cf. the discussion by Cannon, pp. 156 ff., of Wesley's doctrine of religious knowledge.

circumstances and conditions of creaturely existence.[1] In another discussion he outlines six specific ways in which this sovereign freedom is exhibited. It appears (a) in fixing the conditions for salvation, namely, "He that believeth shall be saved: He that believeth not shall be damned." This Wesley insists upon often; (b) in all the general circumstances of creation; (c) in allotting the natural endowments of men; (d) in disposing of all the outward circumstances of each person's birth; (e) in dispensing the various gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the church; and (f) in ordering "all temporal things, as health, fortune, friends, everything short of eternity." In all these God is free--though we have been warned already that none of His attributes must be taken alone; and presumably justice, mercy, and wisdom enter into all these decisions. But "in disposing the eternal states of men. . .it is clear, that not sovereignty alone, but justice, mercy and truth hold the reins." His "eternal and irresistible will" is to proceed under the direction of these principles. Therefore the death of a soul can never be attributed to God's mere pleasure or sovereign will.[2]

It is clear that Wesley here intends to preserve the fullest measure of divine freedom consistent with divine goodness. Other statements emphasize the same theme. "The will of God is the supreme, unalterable rule for every intelligent creature; equally binding every angel in heaven, and

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 361 ff. [2] Ibid., pp. 235 f.

every man upon earth."[1] In discussing the arbitrary command in the Sermon on the Mount regarding fasting, Wesley admits that there is no natural or necessary connection between fasting and the blessings promised. "But he will have mercy as he will have mercy; he will convey whatsoever seemeth him good by whatsoever means he is pleased to appoint."[2] In the face of the divine will who will contend with One mightier than he, whose kingdom rules over all? "It is a mark of sound understanding, to acquiesce in whatever he hath chosen; to say in this, as in all things, 'It is the Lord: Let him do what seemeth him good.'"[3]

God, then, is almost absolutely free; His will is virtually the sole reason for all events. Almost--but not quite. "He that can do all things else cannot deny himself: He cannot counteract himself, or oppose his own work."[4] God is limited, therefore, by self-consistency and, as we shall see in more detail in discussing providence, by human freedom. On the specific question of the role of the will of God Wesley also has something more to say. We have seen in what positive terms he speaks of the moral law; but how is this law related to God's free will? "Is the will of God the cause of his law. . .the original of right and wrong? Is a thing therefore right, because God wills it? or does he will it because it is right?"[5]

Wesley fears that this notorious question is "more

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 107. [2] Ibid., V, 351.

[3] Ibid., p. 74. [4] Ibid., VI, 317. [5] Ibid., V, 440.

curious than useful." Indeed, it is hardly decent for man to pry into such questions concerning the supreme God; yet he does not refuse to answer. The difficulty arises, he finds, from considering the will of God as distinct somehow from His nature (as we have seen that Calvin tends to do). God causes His own law and that "causation" is a matter of will, of positive legislation. "But the will of God is God himself. It is God considered as willing thus or thus. Consequently, to say that the will of God, or that God himself, is the cause of the law, is one and the same thing." If the question is pressed even further, as to whether this law, "the immutable rule of right and wrong, depends upon the nature and fitnesses of things, and on their essential relations," Wesley does not hesitate. He points out that the nature and relations of things must all themselves depend upon the will of God, since they are His creation. But "in every particular case, God wills this or this, (suppose, that men should honour their parents,) because it is right, agreeable to the fitness of things, to the relation wherein they stand."[1]

In other words, there is no abyss of secret counsel or arbitrary determination in God. His nature is represented correctly, though obviously not exhaustively, in the moral law; and His will represents the active expression of His nature. What He wills must therefore be congruent with the true nature of things as we are able, through reason and con-

---

[1] Wesley, Works, V, 440 f.

science, to discern it. Where the unity of God's nature or reason and of His will is emphasized as strongly as this, the will is inevitably thought of as directed by divine reason while it in turn functions simply as the active agent of the latter. There can be nothing in the divine freedom which prejudices or qualifies God's moral goodness.

Divine Power

Wesley shares the traditional view in regard to the omnipotence of God. However, for the most part the point is not labored but simply assumed. God "is. . .the only Agent in the material world; all matter being essentially dull and inactive, and moving only as it is moved by the finger of God; and he is the spring of action in every creature, visible and invisible, which could neither act nor exist, without the continual influx of his almighty power."[1] This sounds like Augustine or one of the Reformers. A shade of difference is perceptible, however, in this statement of the same idea. "He is the true Author of all the motion that is in the universe. To spirits, indeed, he has given a small degree of self-moving power, but. . . .all matter, of whatever kind it be, is absolutely and totally inert."[2] Here the slight qualification, that spirits have some degree of self-moving power, distinguishes Wesley from the typical formal doctrine of the Reformers and opens the way for a restatement of the doctrine of predestination which has far-reaching consequences for the

---

[1] Wesley, *Works*, V, 335.

[2] *Ibid.*, VI, 427.

moral goodness of God.

One more aspect of Wesley's thought regarding the divine activity is worth noting here. It is the idea that although God might theoretically act with irresistible power to set His world right, He will not do so because man would then no longer be a moral agent. How, then, can we expect that His will is to be done on earth, as it is in heaven? How can we hope that all men shall be made "holy and happy, while they continue men? while they still enjoy both the understanding, the affections, and the liberty which are essential to a moral agent?" Wesley answers that God will simply continue to work as He always has done, and this will suffice. To understand this way of working one should examine one's own experience in conversion.

> He did not take away your understanding; but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections; rather they were more vigorous than before. Least of all did he take away your liberty. ...He did not force you; but, being assisted by his grace, you, like Mary, chose the better part.[1]

Wesley does not deny that there are cases where grace seems to work irresistibly for a time, but he insists that in general this is not the case. There is no soul in "which God works irresistibly at all times."[2]

To sum up, God is the total immanent power in all natural objects which work mechanically. He works in and through human life as well, but by means of persuasion primarily, and never with over-riding compulsive force.

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 280 f. [2] Ibid.

Three Critical Doctrines

It has become evident that the doctrines of predestination and providence and the solution of the problem of evil are particularly significant for determining a theologian's attitude regarding the goodness of God. We complete our survey of Wesley's thought by examining his specific statements on these points.

Predestination

Almost twenty years ago George Croft Cell wrote *The Rediscovery of John Wesley*, in which he attempted to place Wesley in what he believed to be the true apostolic succession of Augustinian-Reformation theologians. Contrary to the common interpretation of Wesley as an almost Pelagian thinker with an extreme bias against predestination, Cell argued that his revival was primarily one of theocentric Reformation religion and that on the absolute priority of divine grace Wesley was in virtual agreement with Calvin as well as Luther.[1] This thesis seems to be considerably overdrawn, as we shall see in the following paragraphs. Nevertheless, it calls attention to genuine aspects of Wesley's thought and to certain tensions there between this exaltation of divine initiative and the decisive criteria for a doctrine of God.

The necessity of grace.--No less than Calvin, Wesley insisted upon the absolute necessity of divine grace for man's

---

[1] Cell, especially chaps. i, vi, viii, x, xi.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

salvation. He stated the doctrine of original sin and total depravity in the strongest terms.

> Is man by nature filled with all manner of evil? Is he void of all good? Is he wholly fallen? Is his soul totally corrupted?. . .is "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart only evil continually?" Allow this, and you are so far a Christian. Deny it, and you are but an Heathen still.[1]

This obviously means that man cannot save himself. Hence the beginning of redemption is a conviction of helplessness, of utter inability to "speak one word aright, or perform one good action, but through his free, almighty grace, first preventing us, and then accompanying us every moment."[2]

From these same premises Luther and Calvin concluded that none but the elect can do any good thing. Wesley drew the opposite conclusion much as Zwingli had done. Since obviously many who seem to be outside the Christian fold do good things, therefore God must give a measure of common prevenient grace to all men. Thus passages which Cell cites to prove the absolute priority of grace are quite beside the point when taken to prove Wesley's opinions virtually identical with Calvin's.[3] "Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) preventing grace; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him."[4] Natural man has no freedom to choose

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 63.
[2] Ibid., p. 51.

[3] Cell, pp. 247, 249, 253, 259, etc.

[4] Wesley, Works, VI, 509.

good by his own power, but "every man has a measure of free-will restored to him by grace."[1] Grace is essential--but also universal.

It is in the light of this conception that we must go on to read Wesley's vivid apostrophes to the saving grace of God. Faith

> is the free gift of God, which he bestows, not on those who are worthy of his favour, not on such as are previously holy, and so fit to be crowned with all the blessings of his goodness; but on the ungodly and unholy; on those who till that hour were fit only for everlasting destruction; those in whom was no good thing. . . .His pardoning mercy supposes nothing in us but a sense of mere sin and misery; and to all who see, and feel, and own their wants, and their utter inability to remove them, God freely gives faith.[2]

The word "all" in this last sentence is significant!

Wesley readily grants that the Christian might easily infer that the grace of God works irresistibly in the believer, since he finds no good thing in himself sufficient to account for his salvation. From this it would follow that none can fall from such grace; and thus the whole edifice of unconditional election.[3] However, Wesley sharply rejected these conclusions. As we have seen, he stoutly denied that grace is irresistible. In a rare case it may be so for a time; but he did "not believe there is any human soul in which God works irresistibly at all times."[4]

Election.--If conceived in these terms, as the gift of universal and resistible grace, Wesley was not unwilling

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 392.
[2] Ibid., VIII, 6; cf. p. 49.
[3] Ibid., X, 205.
[4] Ibid., VI, 281.

to speak of the election of believers to salvation. He summarized his doctrine in these terms: "(1.) God knows all believers; (2.) wills that they should be saved from sin; (3.) to that end, justifies them, (4.) sanctifies, and (5.) takes them to glory."[1] This is tied up with a doctrine of complete divine foreknowledge, or rather of eternal timeless knowledge which it is difficult to distinguish from a thorough-going predestinarian scheme. Yet Wesley did not draw the predestinarian conclusions; and he seldom cared to go even this far in speaking of election in the positive sense. He did believe in "a divine appointment of some particular men, to do some particular work in the world." This election is not only personal but absolute and unconditional.[2] But such vocational "election" is quite different from the usual doctrine and rather an aspect of divine providence. Wesley also would admit election as "a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness," but this is strictly conditional and, in fact, impersonal. Its "decree" is simply the general rule: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."[3]

Reprobation.--The reason Wesley was so cautious about using even the term election was his discernment of the fact that used in any but the most general, impersonal, and conditional sense, it necessarily implies the idea of a double decree, of reprobation as well as of salvation. "Consider," he said

> whether you are consistent with yourselves; consider,

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 230. [2] Ibid., X, 210. [3] Ibid.

> whether this election can be separate from reprobation; whether one of them does not imply the other, so that, in holding one, you must hold both.
>
> . . . .
>
> To be consistent with yourself, you must openly assert, that "without reprobation this election cannot stand." You know it cannot.[1]

He simply could not stomach reprobation, in spite of one or two references in his works where he himself seems to slip into asserting it under the stress of some other interest.[2] Calvinists who affirm it, he granted, may be truly religious, burning and shining lights, "real Christians, loving God and all mankind." Yet how insignificant are "all the absurd opinions of all the Romanists in the world" compared to the Calvinist doctrine "that the God of love, the wise, just, merciful Father of the spirits of all flesh, has, from all eternity, fixed an absolute, unchangeable, irresistible decree, that part of mankind shall be saved, do what they will; and the rest damned, do what they can!"[3]

Not only is this an absurd juxtaposition of contradictory attributes but it is unscriptural. To affirm that God hates the reprobate from all eternity is a flat contradiction, "not only to the whole scope and tenor of Scripture, but also to all those particular texts which expressly de-

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 207 f.; cf. VII, 375.

[2] E.g., ibid., VI, 309, interpreting the text "He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts"; "The plain meaning is, not that God did this by his own immediate power; it would be flat blasphemy to say that God, in this sense, hardens any man; but his Spirit strives with them no longer, and then Satan hardens them effectually." Ultimately, the distinction he attempts to draw here is meaningless, as Calvin showed.

[3] Ibid., pp. 199 f.

clare, "God is love."[1] Recognizing that in this case "the devil" could quote Scripture too, Wesley is sometimes driven to a rather desperate literalism. "Where, I pray, is it written that none are saved but by irresistible grace? By almighty grace, I grant; by that power alone, to which all things are possible. But show me any one plain scripture for this,--that 'all saving grace is irresistible.'"[2] This sounds a bit like logomachy; but it rested upon a deep conviction that, taken as a whole, the Scriptures could not possibly be taken to uphold any such doctrine. Wesley also refused to admit that men could be justly condemned for Adam's sin. "That any will be damned for this alone, I allow not, till you show me where it is written. Bring me plain proof from Scripture, and I submit; but till then I utterly deny it."[3]

To his mind this doctrine likewise overthrows the whole Biblical teaching of rewards or punishments. For if God acts irresistibly on the one and Satan on the other it is nonsense to speak of either the elect or the reprobate "acting." A missile projected from a cannon might just as well be rewarded or punished for the course it takes as men, understood as "mere machines, driven to and fro by an external force."[4]

But the real point of Wesley's objection was above all moral. The eloquence of Calvin's rhapsodies about the assurance of the elect is matched by Wesley's as he contemplates

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VII, 380.

[2] Ibid., X, 254.

[3] Ibid., p. 223.

[4] Ibid., p. 224.

the doctrine behind that assurance. For example, to the argument that the reprobate are damned for their sins--which they commit at the instigation of God--Wesley explodes:

> Was ever anything like this? Yes, I have read something like it: When Tiberius had determined to destroy Sejanus and all his family, as it was unlawful to put a virgin to death, what could be done with his daughter, a child of nine years old? Why, the hangman was ordered first to deflower, and then to strangle, her! Yet even good Tiberius did not order her to be strangled 'because she had been deflowered!' If so, it had been a parallel case: it had been just what is here affirmed of the Most High.[1]

Sometimes the elect affirmed a double decree in theory but refused to dwell upon its consequences. Wesley insisted that they must. He drew forth in exquisitely agonizing detail the meaning of the reprobation of a great part of mankind in order to show forth the glory and sovereignty of God. "Now, can you," Wesley asks his opponents, "upon reflection, believe this? Perhaps you will say, 'I do not think about it.' That will never do. You not only think about it, (though it may be confusedly,) but speak about it too, whenever you speak of unconditional election."[2]

When the predestinarian talks about the "love of God," Wesley points out, he means only love to the elect. "You cannot say, he is an object of the love or goodness of God, with regard to his eternal state, whom he created, says Mr. Calvin plainly and fairly. . .'to live a reproach, and die everlastingly.'"[3] Scornfully Wesley refers to the insufficient grace given the reprobate as "damning grace."

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 372 f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 209 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 227.

> Is not this such love as makes your blood run cold? as causes the ears of him that heareth to tingle? And can you believe there is that man on earth or in hell, who can truly tell God, "Thus hast thou done?" Can you think, that the loving, the merciful God, ever dealt thus with any soul which he hath made?[1]

To the whole battery of Scriptural "proofs" Wesley stops his ears with the fingers of moral judgment and cries,

> Whatever that Scripture proves, it never can prove this; whatever its true meaning be, this cannot be its true meaning. . . .It cannot mean, whatever it mean besides, that the God of truth is a liar. . . .that the Judge of all the world is unjust. No scripture can mean that God is not love, or that his mercy is not over all his works; that is, whatever it may prove beside, no scripture can prove predestination.[2]

In the face of such an alternative Wesley did not hesitate to choose even the reproach of preaching salvation by "works." If anyone could prove (what he believed impossible) that there is no middle ground between salvation by works and absolute predestination, he would rather subscribe to the former than to the latter, as "far less absurd of the two."[3]

Wesley shrewdly analyzes the great claim of predestinarian thought that it exalts the "glory of God." What does this mean, he asks. Strictly speaking, His glory must be His essence and attributes which have been and eternally shall be without possibility of increase. Only the manifestation of His power and godhead, and of His moral excellence can be advanced by men. But human free-will far more adequately provides for this manifestation than irresistible

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 229. [2] Ibid., VII, 383.

[3] Ibid., X, 379.

divine action could. If man is free, "then how gloriously does the manifold wisdom of God appear in the whole economy of man's salvation." Likewise His justice may be admirably shown in the rewarding and punishing of those who are proper objects of such justice--but not otherwise. And divine love--how can it be shown in saving one in ten or one in one hundred?

> Why will he have mercy on these alone, and leave all those to inevitable destruction? "He will--because he will!" O that God would give unto you who thus speak, meekness of wisdom! Then would I ask, What would the universal voice of mankind pronounce of the man that should act thus? that being able to deliver millions of men from death with a single breath of his mouth, should refuse to save any more than one in a hundred, and say, "I will not, because I will not!" How then do you exalt the mercy of God, when you ascribe such a proceeding to him?[1]

Although in the course of the argument Wesley has maintained that by the postulate of universal prevenient grace it is possible to ascribe all good to God, and all our salvation to Him, even our first turnings, yet it is not without significance that he really shifts the emphasis from divine glory as power, to glory understood in terms of the moral attributes of wisdom, justice, and love. Clearly, for Wesley this was the heart of theology.

Providence

Human freedom.--In what sense Cell is justified in saying that "the Wesleyan doctrine of freedom is never philosophical, never naturalistic, always religious, theological"[2] we have already seen. It is through God's gift of

---

[1] Wesley, Works, X, 230 ff.

[2] Cell, p. 251.

common grace that man has any freedom at all. But certainly this general "religious" basis for freedom does not mean that "the theology of Wesley moved therefore securely, entirely in Pauline, Augustinian and early Reformation paths."[1] For not by any stretch of the imagination can Wesley be conceived as teaching the will to be a dumb beast, ridden by one supernatural rider or other; or as affirming that God is the Sole Cause in all the evil actions of men. Indeed, Wesley did teach a specifically "philosophic" freedom. His doctrine is neatly summarized in this saying: "I cannot believe the noblest creature in the visible world to be only a fine piece of clock-work."[2] More elaborately he set forth his view in the course of a discourse on "What is Man?" He is conscious, Wesley finds, of an ability called liberty which is "a distinct property of the soul; capable of being exerted with regard to all the faculties of the soul. . . .a power of self-determination; which, although it does not extend to all our thoughts and imaginations, yet extends to our words and actions in general, and not with many exceptions." It includes not only a "liberty of contradiction"--of merely doing or refraining--but that of "contrariety," of acting one way or another. To be sure, this does not imply a complete and absolute power over one's mind. Due to natural

---

[1] Cell, p. 251. Cf. Cannon, pp. 107 f., 114 ff.

[2] Wesley, Works, X, 457. This is from "Thoughts upon Necessity," ibid., X, 457 ff., which is his most direct statement upon the problem of freedom in general; cf. also his briefer, "A Thought on Necessity," ibid., pp. 474 ff.

corruption this is not so. Yet, through the grace of God assisting one, he has real power to do and to choose the good as well as evil, to choose whom one will serve, and to continue therein unto death.[1]

The importance of this conviction of essential human freedom for Wesley's rejection of predestination we have already seen. What implications has it for a doctrine of providence, i.e., of God's control of cosmic history?

Divine government.--Clearly, God's providential control of the world is in some measure limited by the real freedom of spiritual beings. He may, and indeed does, foreknow all things, but "we must not think they are because he knows them. No; he knows them because they are."[2]

Beyond this limitation Wesley expatiates as joyously upon the doctrine of divine providence as could any Augustinian. God is not only the creator, but the preserver of all things, which means that he keeps "them in their several relations, connexions, and dependencies, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe, according to the counsel of his will."[3] Christ is the life of all things, of vegetables and of animals, "the Fountain of all the life which man possesses in common with other animals. And if we distinguish the rational from the animal life, he is the Source of this also."[4]

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VII, 228 f.

[2] Ibid., VI, 226 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 426.

[4] Ibid., pp. 429 f.

Hence such a God cannot be a malignant deity, nor an Epicurean god sitting at ease in the heavens and unmindful of His creatures. He is more concerned for the work of His hands than a mother for her children. It may be hard to believe this, in view of all the wickedness and misery of the world. "But believe it we must, unless we will make God a liar." In sum, "he is infinite in wisdom as well as in power: And all his wisdom is continually employed in managing all the affairs of his creation for the good of all his creatures."[1]

Not only did Wesley believe in providence in general, but he was concerned that it be understood as God's "particular providence over all things, as well as all persons, in the universe." A "general providence" he thought only "a decent, well-sounding word, which means just nothing."[2] This implies, specifically, that miracles, exceptions to the general laws of nature, are to be expected. Indeed, "every answer to prayer is, properly, a miracle."[3]

Wesley is perfectly willing to admit that this involves God in responsibility for an enormous amount of suffering and apparent evil. God uses the ungodly as a precise instrument for that persecution of his children which "will be most for his glory,--will tend most to his children's growth in grace, and the enlargement of his own kingdom."[4] In his enthusiasm Wesley does not shrink from the most grue-

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 317; cf. VII, 271.

[2] Ibid., VI, 28. [3] Ibid., p. 322. [4] Ibid., V, 288.

some metaphors. He speaks of the custom of the "holy butchers" of the Romish Inquisition who keep a physician standing by. His task is to observe the condition of the victim and give notice when the torture is endangering life itself, that the object of their attentions may be preserved long enough to undergo his full meed of suffering. "We observe something like this in our own case," says Wesley.

> In whatever sufferings or temptations we are, our great Physician never departs from us. He is about our bed, and about our path. He observes every symptom of our distress, that it may not rise above our strength. . . . He sees exactly how much we can endure with our present degree of strength. And if this is not sufficient, he can increase it to whatever degree it pleases him.

Repellent as this imagery may be, however, Wesley's conclusion makes clear that he means to enforce the goodness of this kind of particular providential care. Nothing is more certain, he says, "than that in consequence of his wisdom, as well as his justice, mercy, and faithfulness, he never will, he never can, suffer us to be tempted above that we are able."[1]

Not only in the general government of the world, and in the most minute vicissitudes of the individual soul, but also in such medium-sized catastrophes as earthquakes and the rise of Deism, Wesley was prepared to discern the divine hand. In a sermon with the extraordinary title, "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes," he argues that these movements of the earth must be understood as God's "strange works of judgment."[2] The fruit of Deism, on the other hand, was that vast increase in religious toleration in which Wesley so greatly

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 480 f.

[2] Ibid., VII, 388.

rejoiced.[1] In general, his conclusions from regarding the providence of God are extremely optimistic. No time "since the Apostles left the earth, has been better than the present."[2] This mood is engendered partly by the success of his revival, for which he had the largest hopes.[3] But it was due also to his general conviction that this is the best of all possible worlds under the providence of God. To his defence of that idea in the face of widespread evil we must now turn.

The Problem of Evil

We have already observed some of the characteristics of Wesley's answer to that problem of evil which has so often cast doubt upon the goodness of God. He explicitly denied, to begin with, that God is responsible for the eternal loss or punishment of any soul. In turn, this assertion rested upon the postulate of human freedom. This same postulate accounts for much of the empirical evil which we observe in the course of the world's history. Yet Wesley did recognize that a problem still remained.

> If the Creator and Father of every living thing is rich in mercy towards all; if he does not overlook or despise any of the works of his own hands; if he wills even the meanest of them to be happy, according to their degree; how comes it to pass that such a complication of evils oppresses, yea, overwhelms them? How is it that misery of all kinds overspreads the face of the earth?[4]

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VII, 165. Wesley is bitterly sardonic about the burning of Servetus by "merciful John Calvin"; ibid., VI, 201.

[2] Ibid., VII, 166.

[3] Ibid., VI, 288.

[4] Ibid., p. 242.

To begin with, this problem is largely one of pain, of "misery"; and the source of pain is sin. "Had there been no sin, there would have been no pain."[1] Sin, in turn, came from the Fall of man; and that because "man was created in the image of God," i.e., with sense, understanding, will, and liberty. Having the power of choice he chose evil rather than good and thus brought the whole world under a curse.[2] Here Wesley offers a very interesting suggestion as to why Adam actually chose evil. He doubts that man deliberately preferred evil to good. Rather, since by his very nature as a finite, limited being--by the very fact that he was not God--man was fallible. Lacking perfect knowledge he easily mistook evil for good. Thus, tempted by Lucifer (whose own fall was through pride, to self-will, to rebellion), man chose evil, thinking it good. Yet God Himself could not have made man infallible. Thus He is not responsible for sin and its attendant evils.[3]

The true character of God must be discerned, therefore, in the original perfection of His creation, not in the tragic disorder resulting from man's failure. Man was the mediator of all of God's blessings to the rest of the creation, and when this channel was choked up by sin, naturally all suffered; but this was not God's plan nor will.[4] Foreknowing this result, however, why should God have gone ahead to make such a corruptible world at all? To this question

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 215.

[2] Ibid., pp. 215 ff.

[3] Ibid., p. 271.

[4] Ibid., pp. 244 f.

Wesley's piety and optimism found a sufficient answer: Because greater good would result.

As a result of sin God manifests his wisdom and love far more fully than would otherwise have been possible. This he does "by bestowing on all who would receive it an infinitely greater happiness than they could possibly have attained if Adam had not fallen."[1] This is partly clear even in our present experience. If Adam had not fallen, Christ had not died, and our capacity for that faith and love, both for God and for our neighbor, which depends upon our relation to Christ, would never have been developed. Too, without suffering how many of God's richest benefits would be missing from our experience. "Upon this foundation, even our suffering, it is evident all our passive graces are built; yea, the noblest of all Christian graces,--love enduring all things."[2] Above all, the future will give even more and clearer evidence of the essentially fruitful character of what we call evil. "It will not always be thus: These things are only permitted for a season by the great Governor of the world, that he may draw immense, eternal good out of this temporary evil." Signs of this are already discernible in the visible renewing of the earth begun in the Wesleyan Revival![3]

Even in this view there remain mysteries. Why is

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 240.

[2] Ibid., pp. 233-6; cf. ibid., V, 289.

[3] Ibid., VI, 287 f.

the spread of the gospel so uneven, the very access to God's goodness apparently denied so many? This we must leave for a time as God's secret, closing our mouths with the reflection: "It is enough that God knoweth."[1] But in our anticipation of the great last Judgment we have a basis for the confident expectation that these are mysteries only for us, but not for God. Then

> when God hath brought to light all the hidden things of darkness, whosoever were the actors therein, will it be seen that wise and good were all his ways; that he saw through the thick cloud, and governed all things by the wise counsel of his own will; that nothing was left to chance or the caprice of men, but God disposed all strongly and sweetly, and wrought all into one connected chain of justice, mercy, and truth.[2]

Conclusions

In the light of this survey of Wesley's thought and in contrast with much of the theology of earlier Reformers, McConnell's dictum seems well justified: "As to the idea of God, he wrought forcefully in making that idea profoundly moral."[3] His experience of the love of God in justification and in the sanctification of his own life, his conviction that the whole tenor of the Scriptural message is the divine goodness, mercy, and justice, his perception of the flow of divine love through the societies of his converts--all these led him to place at the heart of the gospel this fundamental affirmation. It can hardly be doubted that Wesley's keen

---

[1] Wesley, Works, VI, 349. [2] Ibid., V, 178.

[3] Francis J. McConnell, John Wesley (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1939), p. 144.

ethical concern on the human level reinforced this theological persuasion. The antinomian possibilities in a hyper-Calvinistic assurance of irresistible grace were all too vivid. Religion and morals were bound up on one great reality for Wesley: love from God and love to God, flowing out in love of other men. The foundation upon which all this rested could be nothing less than the perfect goodness of God.

Along with this primary conviction Wesley also held certain views which might seem to shadow it. In particular his high view of divine providence seemed to make God responsible for much evil. Yet Wesley vigorously denied that conclusion; and certainly for him a high optimism, a ruggedness of temper which made suffering and hardship a genuine means of grace, and an overriding concern for man's eternal destiny rather than his lot here, all combined to rob evil of its theological sting. His uncompromising insistence that those who will not receive God's free gift of salvation will suffer eternal torment for their folly is distressing to a more sentimental age. Yet there can be no doubt that Wesley believed God's treatment of sinners to be completely compatible with His perfect love as well as His justice. And it is the principles upon which he organized his doctrine of God, not its adequacy in detail for a later century, with which we are primarily concerned. We may conclude that although Wesley never doubted God's supreme metaphysical excellence, he understood His goodness to be above all moral.

CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Page

Results of the Analysis 275

Metaphysical and Moral Goodness Both Affirmed . 275
    Two kinds of goodness in tension
    A synthesis in terms of law
    A synthesis in terms of personal love
Confirmation in Recent Theology 279
    The moral goodness of God
    Preservation of the "deity" of God

The Problem of a Genuinely Unified Doctrine of God. 286

Difficulties in a Personalist Answer 286
    God in the image of man
    The reaction toward transcendence
    The reaction toward abstraction
The Problem of Paradox 291
    Paradox in general
    Rhetorical paradox in theology
    The problem of antinomies
    Paradox in the doctrine of God

Conclusions 310

CHAPTER VII

THE PROBLEMS RAISED BY THE HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Results of the Analysis

Having completed an examination of the five theologians selected to represent the tradition of reformed Christianity, we have now reached the midpoint of our study of the goodness of God. What conclusions are to be drawn from this survey of classic Protestant thought, and what outstanding problems remain for the formulation of a satisfactory doctrine on this central subject?

Metaphysical and Moral Goodness Both Affirmed

The most obvious result of this historical study is a striking confirmation of that double meaning of divine goodness which was discovered in the preliminary survey of the basic motives of religious thought in Chapter I above. In spite of all the contrasts in their points of view each of these men is concerned to maintain both the metaphysical excellence of God, His aesthetic or ontological supremacy, and likewise His moral goodness. For them all, "God" means a reality of superlative worth in which both kinds of value are supremely exemplified. He represents the ultimate unity of value and existence, or of the ideal and the real.

Two kinds of goodness in tension.--Along with this

general agreement, however, a considerable amount of fundamental difference has been observed. In Calvin, for example, divine goodness in the moral sense, God's love and even His justice toward men, was vigorously proclaimed but quite clearly limited to one small group of mankind, namely, the elect. Outside that charmed circle God acts in marvelous power and freedom but without any real reference to humanly appreciated moral values. His metaphysical supremacy is exemplified in His relations both to the elect and the reprobate, but His moral goodness is rendered very ambiguous by the sharp restriction of its operation.

This tension was somewhat differently expressed by Luther, particularly in his doctrine of two aspects in God. God is "hidden" and He is "revealed" in Christ; He is God "in Himself" as an abyss of searing majesty, and He is God "for us" as a fountain of divine love, poured out upon men as they approach Him through Christ and His Word. The divine attributes tend to be arrayed in pairs representing these contrasting and even contradictory ideas: power and love, justice and mercy, absolute freedom and moral responsibility. There is little doubt that for Luther the moral goodness of God, His love and grace, somehow or other represent the final word about His nature. Yet the force of this conviction is certainly weakened by these tensions.

Part of the difficulty in the case of both men seems to have been a desire to ascribe all conceivable excellence to God, which took precedence over their concern to portray

Him in morally unified terms. This tendency is most strikingly exhibited by Zwingli. Although he used language which taken at face value would imply a hearty affirmation of the moral goodness of God, yet it was the idea of God as the *locus* of supreme and transcendent Being or Power upon which his mind dwelt with most loving emphasis. All conceivable values were wrapped together in a concept of Totality with absolute metaphysical beauty or "excellency," to use a characteristic and eloquent term of Jonathan Edwards.[1] Within this framework the specific attributes of moral goodness played a part, but their essential subordination to the aesthetic or metaphysical glory of God is eloquently attested. For example, God's direct instigation of evil, specifically including moral evil, is justified by the consideration that only so could He make fitting display of all His attributes of justice and mercy, power and freedom![2]

A synthesis in terms of law.--Hooker represents a quite different position in respect to these divergent impulses toward metaphysical or moral perfection. On the one hand, he assigned a primarily metaphysical excellence to God, as the supreme embodiment of Reason or Law. But this absolute divine Order is likewise the indispensable foundation

---

[1] See the paragraphs on "excellence" in the notes on "The Mind"; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, With An Essay on His Genius and Writings by Henry Rogers, and A Memoir by Sereno E. Dwight*; rev. and corrected by Edward Hickman (10th ed.; London: Henry G. Bohn, 1865), I, cclxx ff.

[2] The same idea is found in Calvin and even fleetingly in Luther; but neither of these present it with quite such unabashed straightforwardness as Zwingli.

for moral value--trustworthiness, faithfulness, honor, truth, even love, understood as absolute and generous impartiality. As divine Reason God comes close to being divine Goodness. Moreover, by placing all his thought within the essentially personalistic framework of traditional Christian doctrine Hooker appears to provide a further basis for the unity of these diverse metaphysical and moral aspects in the single wholeness of divine life.[1]

A synthesis in terms of personal love.--Wesley also offers a synthesis of the two aspects of metaphysical and moral excellence. With him, however, the decision to make moral goodness the final criterion for a doctrine of God was even more clearly expressed. He was willing to sacrifice any of the shibboleths of Protestant orthodoxy which seemed absolutely incompatible with the definition, "God is love." In matters of detail he did at times offer opinions which may seem to another generation, with somewhat greater sensitivity to certain moral issues, to compromise that idea. But this is peripheral, in comparison with his major concern.

Like Hooker, Wesley simply accepted the traditional personalism of the Christian doctrine of God as providing the means by which all the divine attributes held together. Indeed, because of his intense and rather naive biblicism,

---

[1] The question here is whether a deity so rationalistically conceived can really bear the attributes of personality. On the other hand, in the measure in which law is thought of as positive command, the stability of the divine moral order is imperiled. The question of personality in God is discussed later in this chapter.

he paid relatively little attention to the problem of combining metaphysical greatness with the moral goodness which he held to be primary. He certainly did not reject the notion of God's ontological supremacy, but his chief bent was practical and he found in metaphysical mysticism little relevance to the salvation of souls. Thus, in effect though not in intent Wesleyan theology has tended to subordinate the metaphysical to the moral excellence of God. So difficult is it to maintain both ideas in their fullness.

Confirmation in Recent Theology

That in spite of this difficulty a satisfactory doctrine of God cannot be framed without affirming both His metaphysical and His moral supremacy is made clear by the recent Protestant theology which continues the traditions whose founders we have studied.

The moral goodness of God.--Whatever else is said about Him, Christian theology must make clear that God's nature is such that we can commit ourselves to Him in absolute trust and faith, hope and devotion. This is the heart of the gospel and the conviction around which the life of the Christian community is gathered from generation to generation. The differences among Luther and Calvin, Hooker, Zwingli, and Wesley are still important in shaping the spirit of present-day schools of Christian thought. But with few exceptions theologians have now set aside their differences on this point and are united in affirming the moral goodness

of God.[1] For example, a Lutheran, Aulén, puts the matter thus:

> The inmost character of the conception of God is love. Consequently, every affirmation about God becomes an affirmation about divine love. Nothing can be said about God, his power, his opposition to evil, or anything else which is not in the last analysis a statement about his love. . . .No other divine "attributes" can be co-ordinated with love, nor can these express something that would cancel love. Nothing more decisive can be stated about the Christian conception of God than the affirmation: "God is agape."[2]

With this verdict another highly influential Lutheran theologian of the present day, Anders Nygren, would fully agree.[3]

In the Calvinist tradition, likewise, the dominant voices of today unite in asserting the primacy of goodness, a righteousness whose heart is love, in the Christian doctrine of God. Karl Barth, in one of his earliest published utterances, says, "Since conscience is the perfect interpreter of life, what it tells us is no question, no riddle, no problem, but a fact--the deepest, innermost, surest fact of life: God is righteous."[4] Again, "faith means seeking not noise but quiet, and letting God speak within--the righteous

---

[1] It is not clear that Tillich, standing in the philosophical-mystical tradition, would consider this affirmation to have any meaning, since for him God is not an existent being or person concerning whom such an affirmation could be made. Cf. Systematic Theology, I, 245.

[2] Aulén, Faith of the Christian Church, p. 131.

[3] Nygren, Agape and Eros, passim, is suffused with this theme. It receives most vivid statement perhaps in Part II, Vol. II, chap. vi, on the renewal of the agape motif in the Reformation.

[4] Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, trans. Douglas Horton (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), p. 9.

God, for there is no other."[1] To be sure, Barth correlates this apprehension of a living God who is truly righteous and not simply the Patron of our partial and corrupted human interests, with the recognition of His judgment upon our sin and that of our world. Nevertheless, a base line is clearly drawn for theology with the unequivocal affirmation of the power of an informed conscience to discern the true character of God. In the latest product of his theological pen Barth once more reaffirms the same principle in an extremely striking way. In his *Dogmatics* he expounds the doctrine of election--which has been historically the source of so much amoral interpretation of God--so as to make it the final symbol of His absolute and impartial goodness. That is, he develops election as a guarantee of universal salvation! "It can be no business of ours," he says, in speaking of the "lost," those who apparently are not elect, "to wish to know and dispose concerning what has happened to them or may happen to them, since they also stand in the light of that which God has done for the world,"[2] i.e., His redemptive work.

Likewise, another outstanding theologian in the Reformed tradition, Emil Brunner, proclaims the same fundamental conviction that the moral goodness of God is primary. To be sure, he sharply criticizes Barth's way of stating the

---

[1] Barth, *Word of God and Word of Man*, p. 25.

[2] Karl Barth, *Die Kirkliche Dogmatik*, Vol. II, Part II, *Die Lehre von Gott* (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag A. G. Zollikon, 1942), p. 552.

doctrine of election.[1] But his own position is made abundantly clear in his Dogmatics: "The statement 'God is Love' points to the very heart of the message of the New Testament, of the Christian Gospel."[2] This Love is truly unfathomable, unmotivated, incomprehensible; it springs solely from God's incomprehensible will to give us His very self.[3]

> Love is God's Nature, and not merely His "temper" (or disposition). Just as sovereignty is His Nature--the Being who is Absolute Subject. . .so also His Being as Subject is "for-some-end," it is Being which goes forth from Itself, Being which communicates Itself.[4]

It is true that Brunner insists equally upon the categories of Lordship and Holiness as characterizing the nature of God. This is in order to guard against all sentimental vitiation of His real deity, however, and not to allow the possibility of any shadow upon His true and ultimate goodness.

Hooker believed that for God the perfect order of wisdom and the perfect order of justice and goodness are inseparable, or perhaps even identical. In his Anglican tradition this conviction of the essential goodness of God has always been ascribed fundamental importance. The characteristic Anglican emphasis upon the Incarnation has underlined this tendency, by emphasizing that the character of God is to be known above all through Christ. William Temple points out the fallacy in asking if Christ is "divine" as if we al-

---

[1] Brunner, Doctrine of God, pp. 348 ff.

[2] Ibid., p. 183.

[3] Ibid., p. 187.

[4] Ibid., pp. 191 f.

ready, quite apart from Christ, knew clearly what "divine" means. To be sure, the religious experience of mankind and the labors of philosophy have given us some light on the meaning of deity. But just because the attributes of a God arrived at in such ways do not seem very compatible with the moral qualities seen in Christ we must be all the more sure that the definitive understanding of "deity" is based squarely upon the moral characteristics discerned in Jesus.[1] If we would know about God, His attitude toward men, "we see it in Christ during the Passion." "The Principle of Reason which governs the world is the eternal victory of Love over selfishness at the cost of sacrifice."[2] With such a view Dean W. R. Matthews agrees:

> The necessary emphasis upon the Holiness of God, upon the wrath of God and the dualism inherent in the Apostolic experience must not be allowed to confuse our apprehension of the fact that the central thought is the love of God. That is the heart of the Gospel. Without it there would be no good news.[3]

We need hardly pause to cite evidence from latter-day Wesleyans since the testimony of Wesley himself is clear enough on the centrality of divine goodness.[4] But what do

---

[1] Temple, Foundations, pp. 213 f.

[2] Ibid., pp. 221 f.

[3] Matthews, p. 79.

[4] It is, of course, extraordinarily interesting to find one of the most prominent and incisive Methodist theologians, Brightman, trying to solve the problem of evil by putting a dark, non-moral or immoral "Given" in the nature of God. But this is certainly not intended to undercut His moral perfection, but rather to vindicate it by relieving the divine will of responsibility for evil. The Given is a moral problem for God, but not a moral blemish in God. His goodness is most fully revealed precisely in His struggle against this impediment to the full expression of His per-

recent theologians of the philosophical type, standing in the tradition of Zwingli, have to say on the question? F. R. Tennant is one of the most careful of these, so restrained in his temper that he cannot bring himself explicitly to ascribe love to the deity, yet nevertheless quite clear on His goodness. "The perfection ascribed to the Deity is, before all else, ethical. Thus when the perfect being, contemplated in Anselm's ontological argument, is described as quo majus nihil, we might substitute melius for majus."[1] He admits that it is difficult to give ethical perfection a precise meaning in view of the enormous differences between the situation of man, the only possessor of moral experience we know well, and that of God. Yet he finds the term not without its legitimate application in respect to God.[2]

Nels Ferré is a spokesman for the more speculative and ontological tradition of philosophical theology; and with him, likewise, the moral goodness of God is central.

---

fect love. Cf. the discussion in The Problem of God (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931), and The Finding of God (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931); also the briefer and more "Platonic" or pluralistic statement in A Philosophy of Religion, chap. x.

In general the attention given this question of a finite God by Methodists is a clear indication of their preoccupation with establishing His unshadowed moral goodness. Cf. McConnell, Is God Limited?. See also the very interesting criticism of Brightman and others in Nannie Belle Baker, The Concept of a Limited God, A Study in the Philosophy of Personalism (Washington, D. C.: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1934), Part II.

[1] F. R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology (Cambridge: University Press, 1937), II, 146.

[2] Ibid., p. 148.

indeed, the fundamental theme which he investigates in his analysis of the doctrine of God is "the adequacy of Christian love to constitute the category of categories for the realms of being and becoming."[1] "God as Love" is the fundamental notion with which he is concerned throughout and which he finds to be the ultimate principle of philosophical explication of the world.[2]

Preservation of the "deity" of God.--While any attempt to formulate a doctrine of God which would be in essential continuity with the central Christian tradition must unequivocally assert His moral goodness, it must also maintain a vigorous sense of His depth and majesty, His transcendent splendor and His awesome mystery. Against any view which would level down our understanding of God to a simple anthropomorphic moralism the Reformers, the theologians of crisis, and the mystical metaphysicians are right. The world is too great and too mysterious to be the creation and the domain of a God who is only a man in large-scale projection. Its inexorable regularities, its unpredictable catastrophes, its pervasive cruelties are the refutation of a too-simple faith which affirms, "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world"[3]--and nothing more. It is no accident that the profoundest literature of mankind is shot through with the

---

[1] Ferré, p. 15. [2] Ibid., pp. 45 f.

[3] Robert Browning, "Pippa's Song," A. T. Quiller-Couch, (ed.), The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904), p. 856.

sense of tragedy and that the art which goes highest, in music or plastic form, conveys a heartbreak in its sublimest beauty. Along with a sure grasp of the ethical perfection which belongs to God, a sound theology must offer some account of that astringent character of reality which it was the merit of less adequately moral systems to recognize in its fullness. Together with an affirmation of the loving intimacy which should subsist between man and God, we must find a place for the worship which hears God say,

> As the heavens are higher than the earth,
> So are my ways higher than your ways.[1]

The Problem of a Genuinely Unified Doctrine of God

As the teaching of the Reformers vividly suggests, the real problem of divine goodness becomes that of holding together in a genuine unity the two kinds of goodness with which we have been concerned. The two thinkers who did most justice to the moral perfection of God, Hooker and Wesley, both relied chiefly upon an inherited category of a personal God, characterized by the unity of conscious life, to perform this function. Yet it is doubtful if such a straightforward personalism is entirely adequate for this task.

Difficulties in a Personalist Answer

There can be no doubt that the Christian tradition is thoroughly and inescapably personalistic. The great philosophic achievement of Biblical thought was the conception

---

[1] Isaiah 55:9.

of the Absolute, the ultimate reality, in personal terms.[1] At its best Christian theology has preserved and intellectually deepened the perfectly moral unity of personality and ultimacy which marks the characteristic New Testament apprehension of God. Yet this unity is difficult to sustain when analysis goes beyond the philosophical naivete of the New Testament.

God in the image of man.--To make God unreservedly personal is to run the risk of assimilating Him rather too closely to the image of man. The difficulty is suggested by the title of a book written by John Wright Buckham, one of the most persuasive exponents of the thoroughgoing personalism characteristic of recent liberal Protestantism: The Humanity of God.[2] To be sure, Buckham himself is quite aware of the dangers lurking in such a phrase and tries to guard against them. He says,

> The humaneness and intimacy of the term Father expose it --it is true--to the liability of being taken literally, thus reducing Isaiah's Holy One "high and lifted up" to the level of an earthly parent. . . .
>
> The idea of a complaisant and easy-going God, too soft-hearted to maintain a moral order, has too far taken the place of that wholesome "fear of the Lord" which is the beginning of wisdom.[3]

---

[1] Duncan Black Macdonald, The Hebrew Philosophical Genius, A Vindication (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), chap. i.

[2] John Wright Buckham, The Humanity of God, An Interpretation of the Divine Fatherhood (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1928).

[3] Ibid., p. 25. Cf. A. E. Taylor, The Faith of a Moralist ("Gifford Lectures," 1926-1928; London: Macmillan

Yet even with such warnings it is all too easy to slip into a notion of the human-all-too-human deity of the "happy gentleman of culture who today drives up so briskly in his little car of progress and so cheerfully displays the pennants of his various ideals."[1] This is the idol whom Barth so effectively criticized in his early prophetic period.

The reaction toward transcendence.--In turn this undue intimacy and superficial optimism have been effectively overcome but in ways which work even greater havoc with a balanced doctrine. One way is that of the extreme personal transcendence well illustrated by the thought of the Reformers and of modern crisis theologians who term God the "Wholly Other."[2] Implicitly or explicitly working with a very

---

and Co., Limited, 1930), I, 243: "An ethical theology is necessarily anthropomorphic, in the sense that it interprets God and God's ways by the analogy of all that is most nobly human, and always with the further caution that as a completely humanised man would be all we can picture to ourselves of what is admirable in man and something more. . .so God is all that perfect human excellence would be and abundantly more. Thus the simple statement that God, whose initiative is the source of all our advance in good, loves man as a father loves his children is inaccurate only because it ascribes too little to God. It falls short because no actual human father loves his children with a love which is wholly bent on giving, wholly wise and wholly unspoiled by facile sentimentality."

[1] Barth, *Word of God and Word of Man*, p. 17. Even Ferré, pp. 30 ff., with all his warm piety and his conviction that God is personal, warns that we must stress not only the personality *of* God but the "fuller truth of personality *in* God."

[2] A term made popular by Rudolf Otto and widely used in such neo-orthodox writings as Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. from 6th German ed. by E. C. Hoskyns (London: Humphrey Milford, 1933), pp. 49 f. Cf. the discussion in Baillie, pp. 228 ff.; and the remarks of H. H. Farmer, *God and Men* (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 106.

sanctified metaphor drawn from human political and social experience, this kind of thinking places God not only beyond our control and experience, but beyond our judgment, beyond our understanding, and beyond our morality. It conceives Him as Cosmic Monarch, the image of an earthly tyrant who disposes of his subjects with absolute freedom and unbounded self-assertion, expanded to an infinite degree. Sheer power, sheer self-will, sheer awesomeness become the primary characteristics of the deity. Nor was it simply a perverse piety which generated such expressions. Intellectual clarity and metaphysical courage strongly suggested that if the Maker and absolute Governor of the tremendous and terrible world in which we live is a Person, made in our image, then He must be this kind of person--or at least that somewhere in His nature there must be terrible depths like these.

The reaction toward abstraction.--A second way in which the superficiality easily engendered by the use of personal symbols for God has been overcome is to exchange them for metaphysical abstractions. Then the "otherness," the numinous and immense and astringent aspect of the God of such a world as ours, is expressed by concepts which in their very contrast with those of our normal experience seem more adequate to the deity. This is the typical procedure of "philosophical" theology, as we are reminded by the cosmic Being of Zwingli. A notable contemporary practitioner of this kind of theology puts the case against a simple personalism very succinctly. Tillich writes:

> Ordinary theism has made God a heavenly, completely perfect person who resides above the world and mankind. The protest of atheism against such a highest person is correct. There is no evidence for his existence, nor is he a matter of ultimate concern.[1]

Rationally, that is, or scientifically, the arguments which are supposed to prove that there is a "personal" God are not convincing. Without some careful reinterpretation it is almost impossible to place this cosmic Person in--or "above"--the universe. Where is He?[2] But even more important, even if they were effective, they might not give us a God with sufficient metaphysical uniqueness and supremacy to be a real God.

Here, then, is a problem which sharply defines the constructive task of a theology which seeks to provide for both moral perfection and metaphysical adequacy in a doctrine of God. Moral goodness in God suggests a personal deity, a heavenly Father. But in the attempt to achieve numinous depth and cosmic relevance a primarily personalistic doctrine is likely to become irrational and amoral. On the other hand, a primarily metaphysical or ontological view tends to become impersonal and, by virtue of that fact, also non-moral. To sum up the matter in terms of three familiar symbols: the "Idea of the Good"[3] is splendid but not

---

[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 245.

[2] Cf. Karl Heim's treatment of this problem, ending in a very agnostic key; God Transcendent, Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic, trans. from the 3rd German ed. by Edward Primrose Dickie, introduction by Edwyn Bevan; (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 209 ff.

[3] Using Plato's great symbol here to represent abstract metaphysical perfection. For a discussion of this symbol see infra, Chap. VIII, the section on Being as Perfection.

morally good; the hidden God of sovereign majesty is great but not good; the heavenly Father of simple theism is good but not believable--and not God.

The Problem of Paradox

At this point it is natural to ask: Why not simply combine these three aspects and so achieve a rounded and adequate doctrine of God? As a matter of fact, just such a shotgun marriage of diverse aspects has characterized most of the historic theologies. We have noted the resulting tensions in Luther's and Calvin's thought. Although more aggravated, perhaps, these are no more real than those involved in Zwingli's combination of metaphysical monism with Biblical personalism, or even in Hooker's juxtaposition of absolute Law with personal characteristics in God. In Wesley too a strict Biblical literalism and a resolute avoidance of most speculative questions betray certain hidden strains.

In a word, historic theology is shot through with the element of paradox, particularly where the doctrine of God and His goodness is concerned. To the dispassionate observer, therefore, Christian theologians are likely to appear as advocates of many deities, each man binding together his particular pantheon with the common name "God."[1] But this procedure is actually defended as essential and fruit-

---

[1] Cf. Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being, A Study of the History of an Idea ("William James Lectures," 1933; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 44.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

ful. In particular, wherever the influence of Kierkegaard has spread--which is very far indeed--this explicitly paradoxical method is prominent.[1] Since it purports to offer a solution for the critical question of the unity of divine greatness and goodness, we must now examine its credentials with some care.

Paradox in general.--The use of paradoxical language is by no means confined to theology. In the hands of a gifted rhetorician like G. K. Chesterton it becomes one of the most effective instruments in the literary tool-chest. To be sure, Chesterton said, "I know nothing so contemptible as a mere paradox."[2] But his paradoxes are not "mere"! They are usually very illuminating and very just. Here is the first one that comes to hand: "The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason."[3] How paradoxical--and how true.

This particular example illustrates two general factors which make paradox in this universal and literary sense possible and enlightening. The first of these is the ambiguity which clings to all our ordinary speech. When Chester-

---

[1] See, for example, S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments, or A Fragment of Philosophy*, trans. with introduction and notes by David Swenson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), chap. iii, "The Absolute Paradox: A Metaphysical Crochet." Cf. Baillie, pp. 219, 225 f.

[2] G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (New York: John Lane Company, 1913), p. 17.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

ton says a madman has lost everything but his reason, he is playing upon the several meanings of "reason." Sometimes it means "rationality, reasonableness, sanity, clarity of mind" and the like. In this sense the madman is the reverse of "reasonable." But reason also refers to the specific ability to link propositions in logical sequence. This faculty the madman often has. His difficulty is that he draws such enormous webs of inference out of inconsequential happenings that he becomes quite obsessed by the results. These inferences are quite "rational" in the narrow sense, but utterly unreasonable in the wider sense, in commonsense. Chesterton's paradox, then, has the merit of lighting up very vividly these differences in the meanings of "reason" and of conveying a healthy warning to all rationalists.

The second factor which underlies the common use of paradox is the complexity of reality and of our experience. The simple facts are not as simple as simple people think. It is one of the merits of profound religion to point this out. Thus the New Testament is full of paradox. "Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."[1] "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you."[2] "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work."[3]

The Lord disciplines him whom he loves,

---

[1] Mark 8:35. [2] Matt. 5:11. [3] Phil. 2: 12 f.

> and chastises every son whom he receives.[1]

All these statements are as clearly true as they are paradoxical. By sufficiently careful statement, precise definition of terms, and perceptive analysis of the intricate texture of the facts with which they are concerned, each of them can be interpreted in an intelligible and quite straightforward manner; but the compressed paradox is more effective in its impact than such a laborious statement.

Rhetorical paradox in theology.--Careful examination of a good deal of theological "paradox," so-called, will reveal it to be of this general rhetorical type. It represents an effective, illuminating way of stating the gist of a truth which would be colorless and tedious in full analysis. Many of the celebrated paradoxes of Reinhold Niebuhr are of this type. He calls the law of love an "impossible possibility," for example.[2] In the carefully defined use of those words the statement sounds like nonsense--and is. What Niebuhr means, however, is not nonsense, but something like this:--Love is a theoretical possibility for man since there is no physically compulsive reason for him to deny it, and there is much in his own nature which supports its claim. Yet the facts of human nature are such that in practice men never achieve it (or at least we know of no such achievement. The universal negative is always treacherous). For this too

---

[1] Heb. 12:6.

[2] Reinhold Niebuhr, An Interpretation of Christian Ethics (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1935), p. 59.

there are many reasons, well known to all--pervasive self-interest, instinctive cowardice and weakness, blindness to the demands of others which is a complex compound of ignorance and self-deception, etc. The result is that man is formally capable of obeying the law of love; but in practice he never does. All this is perfectly reasonable, even "rational." But how much more striking and effective the phrase, "impossible possibility"! Of the same sort are Niebuhr's dicta that "man is most free in the discovery that he is not free,"[1] or that "man sins inevitably, yet without escaping responsibility for his sin."[2]

Theological writing of this kind is perfectly legitimate and often very useful. There can be no objection to it--unless it is made the basis for an assertion that in sober and precise truth the materials with which theology deals can be treated only in paradoxical form, and that thus theological reasoning is not to be criticized by the ordinary canons of logic but occupies a position of special freedom from such rational control. This conclusion is as false and harmful as the paradoxes themselves are innocent and useful, understood as rhetorical devices.

The problem of antinomies.--It may be objected that the foregoing involves too optimistic a view of reason.

---

[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man, A Christian Interpretation, Vol. I, Human Nature ("Gifford Lectures," 1939; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941) p. 260.

[2] Ibid., p. 251.

There are in reality factors which simply will not be tamed by this compromising and rationalizing technique. Three examples, drawn not from theological subject-matter but from science and philosophy, might be cited. First, there is the well-known fact of two theories of light, both well attested and quite incompatible, the corpuscular and the wave theories.[1] Second, there are the more purely rational antinomies or contradictions exhibited in the notion of the mathematical infinite, for example, or the phenomena long ago discussed in Zeno's famous paradoxes.[2] It is an axiom of all reason, we are reminded, that the whole is greater than any of its parts; yet the infinite series of numbers is no greater than the series formed by picking out one out of every ten of the numbers in the former series. How can this be understood in terms of rational coherence? Third, there are the philosophical antinomies made famous by Kant, to which reference has been made earlier in this study. For example, time, one of the most familiar of all experienced realities, both must and must not have a beginning; either alternative is unthinkable.[3]

To the allegation that these are matters which necessarily require paradoxical treatment, various answers must

---

[1] Cf. A. S. Eddington, The Nature of the Physical World ("Gifford Lectures," 1927; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 185 ff.

[2] Charles M. Bakewell, Source Book in Ancient Philosophy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), pp. 22 ff.

[3] Kant, pp. 241 ff.

be made. Such a paradox as the two theories of light is accepted as a temporary formulation of an unsolved problem. It is not held that light is both a wave phenomenon without any real particles involved; and also a corpuscular phenomenon with no real waves involved; but that it acts in such fashion as to suggest that both characters co-exist in a way we cannot explain. The paradox simply shows that as yet a satisfactory frame of reference within which to coordinate the phenomena represented by the double theory has not yet been found.[1] Scientific thought operates consciously or unconsciously upon the basis of the axiom which Charles Peirce laid down:

> Upon this first, and in one sense this sole, rule of reason, that in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think, there follows one corollary which itself deserves to be inscribed upon every wall of the city of philosophy:
> Do not block the way of inquiry.[2]

All progress in knowledge and understanding whatsoever derives from the impulse to solve problems, to bring order and meaning and effective control into areas which hitherto have represented blind alleys for the mind. Every new addition to our knowledge, therefore, represents a con-

---

[1] Eddington, pp. 185 f. Cf. J. B. S. Haldane: "My objection to pluralistic systems which hold that the distinction between different minds, or between mind and matter, is irreducible. . . .is just that they proclaim problems to be insoluble merely because three thousand years of thought by a few members of a species which may have many hundred million years ahead of it has not yet solved them"; quoted in Charles Hartshorne, The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), p. 243.

[2] Justus Buchler (ed.), The Philosophy of Peirce, Selected Writings (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950), p. 54 (italics ours).

firmation of the validity and fruitfulness of this axiom. All creative thought, even in a theology which considers itself bound to a given revelation as providing its initial data, exhibits the force of this principle in the very processes which constitute its being. To draw a line anywhere and say, "Beyond this point no increase in intelligibility can take place" is to end the whole intellectual enterprise in that very act. Every new theological book, no matter how conservative its contents, is a testimony to the necessity of this axiom--for if the book did not in some respect make the truth clearer or more coherent or in some way deepen its meaningful correlation with other knowledge, there would be no point in writing it. The very fact of the enterprise of theology therefore validates the soundness of the principle that we must not block the way of inquiry. Furthermore, as Ferré has pointed out, although the categories of our experience and logic may represent only a small part of all reality, yet it remains highly probable that "whatever best satisfies our demands for the explanation of this world must at least symmetrically indicate whatever goes beyond our categories. Our standard of truth is consequently reliable, however little it can be proved to be final."[1]

As to the second kind of "paradoxical" reality illustrated in the mathematical infinite, the problem seems really to be a subtle case of linguistic ambiguity. It is paradoxical to say that 1/10th of a thing is as great as the

---

[1] Ferré, p. 15.

thing itself. But the infinite is not a "thing" in the ordinary sense. It is, in fact, a term (it is not an existent entity) which is defined as that which can be represented or "mirrored" by one of its parts.[1] There remains no real paradox in the fact that the infinite then turns out to be what its definition requires!

The third kind of paradoxical reality, symbolized by the antinomies of Kant, may be taken as evidence for the fact that there is much that is real which we find it difficult or impossible to visualize or imaginatively grasp. We cannot quite manage to "think" the beginning of time--the mind just goes blank as it approaches this point as a limit. Indeed, we ought to go farther and say that all fact is irrational in the sense that we cannot grasp why it should be so. Why time should have certain baffling aspects really raises no more difficulties than the old question about why the black cow eating green grass gives white milk! We can project an indefinite series of explanations but at the end the sheer brute fact remains, that things appear so and not otherwise. In other words, the world is a congeries of empirical facts, not a deductive system of ideas.

Paradox in the doctrine of God.--In discussing the general character of paradox and the degree to which it is legitimate in the expression of thought, we have already touched upon some aspects of its use in theology. However,

---

[1] Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 265.

theologians are usually not concerned to affirm paradoxical characteristics in all reality but rather to urge that the things of faith are unique precisely because they demand a paradoxical treatment which ordinary experience does not require. Aulén, for example, declares that a

> paradoxical element does not belong simply to a few affirmations of faith, but that it pervades and characterizes the whole content. Nor is it a question of a temporary character of these affirmations which might be removed by the theological analysis; it belongs rather to their very nature. If theology succeeded in removing this characteristic it would constitute a reinterpretation of faith of such a nature that its declarations would no longer be affirmations of faith.[1]

The reason is that all these affirmations are statements about God, directly or indirectly, and God can be spoken of only in terms of paradox. This is so, in the final analysis, because it is revealed that God is characterized by logically incompatible elements. And since theology is the "science" of Christian faith, its function is simply to set forth in orderly and clear form the affirmations of revelation, not to go behind them or to criticize them. Hence all these paradoxical elements must somehow be worked into theological doctrine.[2] For example, it must be asserted that God is both "the Eternal, exalted above all temporal change," and also the "One who is active in the changing phases of history." Likewise God is the sovereign Lord of history, yet constantly engaged in a struggle against

---

[1] Aulén, Faith of the Christian Church, p. 101.

[2] Ibid., pp. 20 ff.

antagonistic forces. In love He forgives sin; yet He stands in radical opposition to it in wrath and judgment.

Having illustrated the difficulties, however, Aulén immediately proceeds to take the edge off them by insisting that such paradoxes are purely "religious" and are not to be converted into contradictory logical propositions. Furthermore, he points out that some of these ideas, even when converted into propositions of ordinary reason, would hardly be logically contradictory. For example, God's forgiving a sinner and receiving him into communion with Himself may be "paradoxical" but there is nothing theoretically contradictory or practically unthinkable about it.[1]

The fact is that as he presents it Aulén's argument virtually comes down to insisting that for religious purposes --to express our faith or our piety--we must employ verbal symbols which sound contradictory. But we must resolutely refuse to convert these into rational propositions which would in fact _be_ contradictory, for there is no real contradiction in the case. This seems to make theology a kind of poetry, using symbols in an emotional or evocative way but without logical meaning in the ordinary sense of the term. This procedure confuses the respective realms of poetry and theology. The latter, if it means anything distinctive, surely means the logical and discursive statement of a faith which, by contrast is given emotional and aesthetic expression through hymn and poem, prayer and anthem. Aulén him-

---

[1] Aulén, _Faith of the Christian Church_, pp. 102 f.

self has defined theology as this kind of "science," and Brunner agrees that this is its true function.[1]

Aulén and Brunner would presumably answer this criticism by saying that theology is self-consistent and rational within its own framework of assumptions and categories but that it is paradoxical in relation to reason in general.[2] This does not really explain, however, how for Aulen theological propositions are "religiously" paradoxical but "rationally" intelligible. The reverse would seem to follow from his assumptions.

At any rate, Aulén's statement that no logical or metaphysical contradictions are intended is confirmed by analysis of some of his statements which are supposed to exhibit this paradoxical character. For example, the contrast he cites between the nature of God as "Eternal, exalted above all temporal change," and also as the "One who is active in the changing phases of history," by no means rules out a solution which is quite free from paradox. As Charles Hartshorne points out, God is undoubtedly eternal and above all change in some respects; for example, in His character, His purpose, and His metaphysical supremacy. In these respects He completely exemplifies the formal characteristics of eternity, faithfulness, immutability, and the like. At the same time, as a living God he exhibits in the full concreteness

---

[1] Cf. Brunner, Doctrine of God, "Prolegomena," especially chap. x.

[2] Cf. the argument of Alan Richardson concerning the status of theology as a special empirical science with categories of its own; Christian Apologetics (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947), chaps. ii and x.

of His experience complete relativity to or participation in all the particular events of cosmic history. Nor is there anything particularly paradoxical or difficult to understand in this. Every human being exhibits in a much more limited degree the same two aspects of abstract character and of concrete experience and activity.[1]

Tillich offers a more generalized argument for the necessity of paradox. He finds that "dialectical" reason is required for dealing with ultimate reality because reality exhibits "polar elements" of dynamics and form, freedom and destiny," etc. These must be traced back to the Absolute ground of all reality, God, and there be affirmed to co-exist without contradiction or confusion.[2] This necessarily involves theology in paradoxical assertions which point to the "fact that in God's acting finite reason is superseded but not annihilated; it expresses this fact in terms which are

---

[1] Charles Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God, and the Logic of Theism (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), pp. 234 ff. Cf. Ferré, pp. 17 ff. It is true that to understand just how it is that a human being combines these two elements of on-going personal identity with constant change in mental content and physical attributes involves extremely difficult problems of analysis--biological, psychological, and metaphysical. But that it is a matter of fact cannot be denied, and that it can be true of God is no more difficult to see than that it is true of us. Beyond this point the problem must be attacked in terms of categorical analysis. All these ultimate problems of intelligibility finally come down to the question of an adequately inclusive and flexible conceptual framework, i.e., to the question of categories. The progression in physics from Newtonian gravitation to the special theory of relativity and then the general theory of relativity, and now the search for a unified field theory, provides an illustration in one specific field for the increase of intelligibility in general.

[2] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 174 ff., 249 ff.

not logically contradictory, but which are supposed to point beyond the realm in which finite reason is applicable."[1]

The difficulty here seems to lie in Tillich's notion that there is some kind of impossibly rigid "finite reason" which is all right in the sphere of everyday factuality but which breaks down in relation to ultimate reality; and another kind of mystico-metaphysical "ontological reason" required for dealing with ultimate reality. But the fact is that this kind of "finite reason" is never adequate for any kind of experience. The ultimate polarities of which he makes so much are simply a formalized scheme of the empirical complexities, surprises, and surds of which everyday life is full.

Rather, what is needed on both levels is an adequate understanding of "reason" as the total intellectual equipment which man brings to the solution of all problems. This is symbolized in the "intelligence" of John Dewey,[2] or is the kind of "mind" superbly illustrated in C. I. Lewis, Mind and the World-Order.[3] Its essence consists in accepting as fact what is fact, and building a flexible and progressive system of order in which all facts might ultimately find their place, at least in principle. The task of ordering experience is never complete and is perhaps only an ideal

---

[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 57.

[2] Dewey's idea of "intelligence" is set forth best in Essays in Experimental Logic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916), and Experience and Nature (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1925).

[3] Clarence Irving Lewis, Mind and the World-Order, Outline of a Theory of Knowledge (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929).

limit for intellectual progress. But it excludes on principle the dividing of experience into classes of which one represents the contradiction of the other. An example would be the differences among physics, biology, and psychology in respect to categories and presuppositions. They operate in quite different ways and what is assumed to be possible in one is sometimes excluded from the other by definition (i.e., the relevance of organic final causes in biology, and aesthetic ones in psychology, while final causality is excluded on principle from modern physics). But they all co-exist within one general setting of intelligible natural order without demanding special types of "reason" for their investigation or paradoxes for their expression and correlation. It is of Tillich's apparent blindness to this conception of reason that Randall speaks with gentle irony: "Tillich would really do well to strike up an acquaintance with 'intelligence.' He might in the end even be willing to participate in it."[1]

Yet another way of stating this view that the doctrine of God requires paradoxical statement is suggested by Donald Baillie, together with Brunner and others. He argues that the reason God cannot be comprehended in any human words or in any of the categories of our finite thought is that He can be known only in direct personal relationship. He must be addressed as "Thou" but can never be talked about or "ob-

---

[1] John Herman Randall, Jr., "The Ontology of Paul Tillich," in The Theology of Paul Tillich, Kegley & Bretall, eds., p. 150.

jectified." As soon as we try to convert the direct address of personal relation into description in the third person our thought falls into contradiction. But since we must so speak of Him--for this is the very point of theology--we must accept the necessity of paradox. To speak conceptually of God is like trying to draw a map of the world on a flat surface. Since incommensurable dimensions are involved this cannot be done accurately. But by drawing two different maps according to different "projections" we get a fair idea of the reality even though the two maps appear to be contradictory. It is just because of this that they correct and supplement each other and so fulfill their purpose. The paradoxes of theology are like the differences between these maps. They are indispensable. Yet, as Baillie warns, they must be used with care and only when they spring directly from "the immediate utterances of faith." For "since a paradox is a self-contradictory statement, we simply *do not know what it means or what we mean by it* unless it has that direct connection with the faith which it attempts to express."[1]

This is a subtle argument, especially when read in the light of the discussions by Buber[2] and John Baillie[3] up-

---

[1] D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ, An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948), pp. 108 ff. Cf. Emil Brunner, *The Divine-Human Encounter*, trans. Amandus W. Loos (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), pp. 20 f.

[2] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), pp. 79 ff.

[3] Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God*, pp. 219-227.

on which it is based to a considerable extent. It calls for several comments.

First, this idea of "immediate utterances" of faith is a notoriously treacherous one. How is one to identify such an utterance and distinguish it from the "dreams of a ghost-seer"?[1] By reference to the common consent of Christian believers, perhaps? But this would be precisely to invert the meaning of "immediate," and to accept the principle upon which Roman Catholic authority is based. We shall be well-advised to leave alone this slippery notion of "immediate utterances" which justify paradoxes and contradictions.

Second, if the crux of the difficulty is that God is a person, why do not all attempts to talk about persons and personal relationships, human as well as divine, involve paradox? Here it is argued that the case of God is unique since He is the only Person who is always present to us as subject. The theory is that it is only objects about which we can talk in non-paradoxical terms. To speak about God, therefore, is to do violence to His nature as subject. However, the assumption that to make a person an "object" is necessarily to make him a mere "thing," purely relative to oneself or under one's control, is quite ungrounded. As Hartshorne points out, "object" simply means that to which I am related in conscious terms. To be aware of a subject, to say "Thou" with all the personal and existential concern im-

---

[1] Immanual Kant's term, used derisively of Swedenborg, but raising the whole problem of the verification of subjective intuitions.

agitable, is still to have the other subject as an "object" in this sense. The whole meaning of epistemological realism --which is the necessary correlate of the assumption that there really are other selves--is that being-known is only *verbally* a relation. It does nothing to the "object"; it is the *subject* who is related. We do nothing to God in knowing Him, any more than a triangle changes every time a new pupil studies geometry, or the neglect of an artistic masterpiece for a century diminishes its beauty. To be sure, all our knowledge of persons does also tend to "objectify" them in the unfortunate sense of the term, and Hartshorne points out that the reason for this lies in the deficiencies of our actual knowing. We

> cannot be fully aware of persons as such, and hence our image of them does reduce their spirituality--not literally, for this image does nothing to them, but it produces an illusion of their reduction. We are not directly aware of other human spirits to any appreciable degree, but rather of changes in our bodies (sense organs and brains) produced by changes in their bodies. . . . So other-life tends to appear for us as more or less dead, or lacking in intensity and richness, mere 'objects' or 'things'.[1]

---

[1] Charles Hartshorne, "Tillich's Doctrine of God," in *The Theology of Paul Tillich*, Kegley & Bretall, eds., p. 185. This does not prejudge the question as to the truth of some degree of immediate knowledge of other spirits ("telepathic" or in some undefined way). It simply recognizes the fact that to a large extent we do seem to "know" them chiefly in an "objective" way.

It is sometimes felt that the way in which we "know" God--i.e., with respect and humility, or otherwise--actually "honors" or "dishonors" Him. But this implies that our view of God actually creates some portion of His glory. This makes Him dependent on man with a vengeance! The proper view would seem to be this: that His glory and value *is* what it *is* as a necessary character of His metaphysical supremacy; but that we do genuinely enrich His *subjective* life by our recognition, appreciation, worship, etc. This provides for a real but strictly limited and appropriate relativity of

But the critical point is that this is as likely to happen in direct interpersonal confrontation as in third-party thinking or discussion. I may *confront* you as a "Thou" whom I will to use as an instrument of my own purposes, as well as *think about* you in such terms. The issue is not the recognition of the *presence* of the other subject; it is the recognition of his dignity, of his being a "person" in the axiological sense of that term.

The other point to be made in connection with this argument that we cannot properly speak of God as object, and hence that our necessarily "objective" speech about Him must be paradoxical, is that the problem to which Buber refers--that God must always be addressed, not expressed--is simply a psychological one of sequence of attention.[1] One can perfectly well recognize the presence of God in all His subjective fullness and still talk about Him in the third person to another human being. It is like a three-sided conversation in which two members discuss the third person present in an objective way, even while recognizing his presence. The situation is unusual, and is likely to be embarrassing. But the real presence of God is generally embarrassing! The problem involved is simply to hold in mind at one and the same time two attitudes toward the person present who is be-

---

God to man. Calvin's notion that one sin intolerably besmirches the Divine honor gives the sinner far too much power over God.

[1] Buber, p. 81.

ing talked about: an attitude of direct recognition together with one of indirect contemplation.

In spite of these complexities into which we are led by the fact of God's omnipresence there seems to be no reason to insist that they must lead to paradoxical expressions. The whole problem looks like a mystification into which thinkers are led by confusing the meanings of words like "object" and by the admittedly unique character of our relation to God. That this uniqueness necessarily involves us in contradictory statements about His nature seems a quite groundless assumption.

Conclusions

The case against using paradox to hold together by sheer verbal force incompatible attributes or characters in God may be summed up as follows: (a) the literary values of paradox may be recognized and retained, but they cannot be allowed to override critical discrimination nor the requirements of coherence; (b) paradox is useful in underlining problems which remain unsolved, i.e., impossible at present to bring within the compass of an ordered system of ideas. This failure to reach a full solution may well continue until "we know even as we are known." But in *principle* it is ordered and coherent knowledge we are seeking; (c) in the absence of better evidence than has yet been offered that present antinomies in theology necessarily represent ultimate inconsistencies or incoherences in the nature of

God, we must assume that they do not, but rather represent a program for further thought.

When all is said and done, however, the only adequate answer to the assertion that we must talk about God in terms of verbal contradictions is to produce a doctrine of His nature which will actually do what paradoxical theology claims cannot be done. That is, we must find a way to provide for those major elements of metaphysical and moral supremacy which Christian experience and reason agree in assigning to God, within a genuinely unified and intelligible structure of ideas. How is such a doctrine to be achieved?

We have just seen the inadequacy of trying to cram together all the necessary aspects of God in paradoxical relation. This procedure involved specifying in advance what elements are necessary and then simply affirming them all at once, regardless of the consequences. The alternative would appear to be the selection of one element as fundamental, ultimate, decisive--the criterion for all else that might be said about God--and then seeing how far the other indispensable factors might be deduced from, or at any rate, genuinely integrated with, this one. If an adequate range and balance of attributes could be worked out on this basis, the desired unity would then be achieved.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEARCH FOR A BASIC CATEGORY FOR THE NATURE OF GOD

Page

The Reason for a Categorial Analysis 313

The Category of Power 315

Its Role in the Tradition 315
Evaluation of the Category of Power 319
God's responsibility for evil
The good defined by Power
Criticism of the definition of good by Power
Conclusion: the inadequacy of Power

The Category of Order 330

The Importance of Order in Christian Thought. . . 331
The Platonic Use of Order 332
The sole primacy of Order
Platonic pluralism
Platonic Pluralism in Christian Theology. 336
Implications of Atonement Theories. 337
Difficulties in a Dualism of Power and Order. . . 339
An independent realm of Order unthinkable
Pluralism destroys the primacy of God
The Element of Order is in God 341
Conclusion: Both Order and Power Essential. . . . 344
Remaining difficulties

The Category of Being 346

Historical Significance 346
Being in Roman Catholic thought
Being in Protestant thought
Analysis of the Concept of Being. 349
God as supreme in "quantity" of Being
God as supreme in "perfection" of Being
God as Becoming
Static perfection not moral
Being as plenitude
Being as Qualitative Fullness 363
Qualitative supremacy involves subjectivity

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEARCH FOR A BASIC CATEGORY FOR THE NATURE OF GOD

The Reason for a Categorial Analysis

The summary and evaluation of our survey of classic Protestant doctrines has led to the conclusion that unity and adequacy in our thought of God might best be achieved by finding a fundamental category descriptive of His nature and developing a doctrine under the control of this single idea. Rather interesting confirmation of this suggestion is offered by Stephen C. Pepper's theory about the nature of those few great metaphysical systems which have persisted, with constant modification in detail but amazing persistence in general character, throughout centuries of speculation.

Pepper calls this the "root metaphor theory of metaphysics." He summarizes it as the view

> that a world hypothesis to cover all facts is framed in the first instance on the basis of a rather small set of facts and then expanded in reference so as to cover all facts. The set of facts which inspired the hypothesis is the original root metaphor.

Thus he traces the philosophies of immanent realism to the experience of similarity; those of transcendent realism to that of form and matter. The metaphor of push-and-pull underlies mechanistic views; that of organic wholeness, objective idealism; while temporal process suggests a contextual-

ism or metaphysical pragmatism. Each of these, he points out, seems to be partial, eaten by an "ulcer of internal contradiction." Yet each obviously fits some of the facts and so survives and serves the purposes of thought.[1]

Regardless of the accuracy of this analysis in detail, it does seem to point with substantial truth to the way in which men have constructed their most general theories of the world. It is now our concern to see what can be done for the doctrine of God, particularly in reference to the unity of His metaphysical and moral supremacy, by the use of some such "root metaphor" or category. Throughout the history of Christian thought a number of such fundamental notions have been used in framing the concept of God. The precise definition of these basic categories would be a major task beyond the scope of this study. But a little reflection on the five thinkers just surveyed will reveal the dominance of four major notions. These are: (a) divine Power (Will, Lordship), notably in Calvin, Zwingli, and Luther, but also in the other two; (b) divine Order (Reason, Justice, Law), particularly in Hooker and also in Wesley; (c) divine fulness of Being, especially prominent in Zwingli; and (d) divine Love (Kindness, Mercy, Sympathy), most clearly dominant in Wesley but present in all. Is it possible to derive an adequate doctrine of the divine nature by developing the implications of one or another of these four categories?

---

[1] Stephen C. Pepper, "The Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics," The Journal of Philosophy, XXXII, (July 4, 1935), pp. 365 ff.

The Category of Power

Its Role in the Tradition

One of the most pervasive characteristics of our theological tradition has been the central place assigned to the idea of divine Power. In Luther's affirmation of God's omnipotence, Calvin's preoccupation with sovereignty and providence, the emphasis by Zwingli upon God as Sole Cause, that theme received varied and vigorous expression. This is quite natural. Reflective thought, whether primarily religious or not, has always sought the reason for events in an invisible and divine source of energy. God is the Lord, the sovereign governor of that process of incessant change, motion, growth and decay, that theater of vast and incalculable powers, which is the environment of man. In the thunderstorm, the hurricane, the earthquake, and the volcano men find vivid symbols of the deity.[1] Likewise human history reflects the all-controlling power of God. The most formidable human force is the rod of His anger.[2]

> If there be disaster in a city,
> has not the Lord caused it?[3]

A weak god, one without Power, is nothing, a futile thing, as Elijah long ago persuaded the people of Israel.[4] Indeed, His name is sometimes called "Power."[5]

---

[1] Cf. Psalm 29; Job 38:1-3, 40:1-7; Exodus 19:16-20.

[2] Isaiah 10:5.

[3] Amos 3:6.

[4] I Kings 18.

[5] Mark 14:62.

In the traditional vocabulary of Christian thought this category of Power becomes the divine attribute of omnipotence. Where theology deals largely in philosophical categories it places great emphasis upon the idea of causality, and God becomes First Cause or even Sole Cause. In a doctrine developed primarily in personalistic terms the emphasis laid upon divine sovereignty and providence, or upon the Will of God, is likewise a clue to the role being played by this notion of God as a transcendent fountain of energy from which all the motion of the cosmos derives and by whose sway all is ruled.[1]

In the more recent history of Protestant doctrine this category of Power has continued to be of highest importance. For example, Schleiermacher's fundamental religious concept, that of man's "absolute dependence," is obviously the correlate of an idea of God framed in terms of absolute causality. The world is a single unified system in which everything is in relation to all else, and all depends completely and directly upon the divine power which is its ground and its energy. "Everything is and becomes altogether

---

[1] An interesting suggestion of the indispensability of this factor is afforded by the vocabulary of Roman Catholic theology in treating of its fundamental category of Being. Gilson says, "'to be' is the primitive and fundamental act by virtue of which a certain being actually is, or exists;" God and Philosophy, p. 64 (italics ours). The element of energy must be imported into the most static of concepts! Matthews, p. 106, has an illuminating though perhaps not quite fair discussion of Calvinistic theology in terms of this category. He affirms that it "has in effect taken an abstraction and treated it as constituting the essence of Deity"--i.e., the concept of sovereignty or Power.

by means of the natural order, so that each takes place through all and all wholly through the divine omnipotence."[1] There is no distinction between actual and possible for God, since this would imply "a self-limitation of the divine omnipotence which can never be given in experience";[2] nor is there any distinction between "can" and "will." This would involve an ability without will; but for God this is impossible since will must then proceed from an individual impulse and hence an impulse which has some cause, some occasion. But God is the total unity of all causes; He is absolutely unconditioned and Himself the cause, the energy, the condition, the source of all. He can never be able to do anything He does not will. Conversely, there can be in Him no will which is unaccompanied by sufficient Power.[3]

In a quite different way an outstanding contemporary theologian, Brunner, appears to organize his doctrine of God about this same category of Power. He speaks in personal rather than philosophical terms, but his root idea is similar. For Brunner the first thing to say about God is that He is "Lord." By "Lord" Brunner claims to mean something quite different from the Sole Cause of Schleiermacher or of Zwingli. That term, he says, signifies first of all that

---

[1] Schleiermacher, p. 212. [2] Ibid., p. 214.

[3] Cf. "Third Doctrine: God is Omnipotent," ibid., pp. 211 ff. Brandt points out that Schleiermacher had a lifelong conviction of the truth of determinism; Richard B. Brandt, The Philosophy of Schleiermacher, The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), p. 28.

"God is Subject: addressing us, making Himself known to us;" He is "the Personality who speaks, acts, disclosing to us Himself and His will."[1] But the content of this idea of subjectivity or personality is set forth in terms which are essentially those of Power or energy. It means "freedom, positing and not being posited, thinking and not being thought, that which is absolutely spontaneous, that which is only active and not at the same time passive, that which only gives and does not at the same time receive."[2] This meaning of subjectivity is then specifically developed in terms of divine sovereignty: "God reveals Himself as One who has an absolute right to lay His claim upon us; and He reveals Himself as One who exercises absolute power over us. We gather up both these elements in the idea of the Divine sovereign majesty."[3] It is from this primary apprehension of the absolute Power of God, and His absolute fullness of Being, that we come to recognize Him as creator. In turn, this idea then reinforces the centrality of divine Power since the existence of all that is must be ascribed to His working. From this we see the validity of the traditional concept of actus purus. "Where He does not make Himself passive, God is pure activity, spontaneity, freedom. . . .the Living God, the God who i the source of all life. God alone is pure energy." He has "unconditional freedom, unlimited vitality, unlimited independence, purely positing, originally creative

---

[1] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 139.

[2] Ibid., p. 140.

[3] Ibid., p. 141.

Power."[1]

It is quite true that Brunner immediately proceeds to give richer content to this notion of God as sheer Power. God exhibits His Lordship, for example, most fully and freely precisely in His acts of redemption, in His own condescension and self-giving to the creature.[2] As we noted earlier, Brunner makes it very explicit that the form of the sovereign Power of God is Love. In a systematic presentation of Brunner's doctrine it would be necessary to take account of all these complexities; but at this point our sole interest is in examining the way in which the category of Power may be used as a core around which to construct a coherent doctrine of God. The consequences of the selection of this primary concept are our next concern.

Evaluation of the Category of Power

Without denying that Power is an essential element in an adequate concept of God, we must nevertheless recognize that it is very badly suited to be the fundamental category for theological thought. In particular, it is singularly difficult to bring into organic relation with the notion of moral goodness. There are at least two obvious reasons why this is the case.

God's responsibility for evil.--Whether divine Power is conceived in philosophical fashion as total causality or in more personalistic fashion as sovereignty, absolute provi-

---

[1] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 145. [2] Ibid., p. 148.

dence or irresistible will, it inevitably connects God all too closely with the fact of evil. He becomes responsible for evil in precisely the degree to which he has power to prevent it. God's moral perfection is in inverse proportion to the degree of His actual control over the process in which evil occurs. Many attempts have been made to preserve the element of Power in God while relieving Him of responsibility for evil. Sometimes "omnipotence" is redefined so that it is not all power, but rather adequate power.[1] Farmer urges that God's will is "omnipotent, that is, omni-effective, wholly competent to achieve its ends." But he goes on to add that "the divine omnipotence must be understood strictly in terms of the divine personal will and its intrinsic character and direction."[2]

As an effort to save a word with hallowed associations this procedure may be acceptable. But it should not confuse the fact that as God's responsibility for evil is decreased, so is His effective power decreased in exact proportion. It may be said, in the same spirit, that God is "self-limited" only, with the implication that He has all power but does not choose to employ it to bring a particular good into existence or to prevent a particular evil. Thus Tennant sees the laws of nature by which God is "limited" as the

> expression of the free but self-determined will of God

---

[1] D. C. Mackintosh, Theology as an Empirical Science, pp. 181 ff.

[2] Farmer, p. 111.

> acting in relation to the creatures to whom He has delegated intelligent and moral life. Such self-limitation is to be regarded as itself the outcome of the divine will and not an inner necessity of His own Being.[1]

Harkness likewise urges that the limitations imposed by the demands of rationality and by the creation of men with moral freedom still leave God "in an important sense omnipotent; for God is limited by no power that does not proceed from his own will."[2] Nevertheless, if God's decision to limit Himself is a fact, a "given" which He cannot at will overthrow, His power is decreased to just that extent.[3] On the other hand, if in any given case of evil His decision to abstain from corrective action is entirely free, then He is responsible.[4]

The problems connected with the idea of divine omnipotence have suggested the alternative possibility of an externally limited or "finite" God. None of the various theories offered has won very general acceptance, but they have doubtless contributed a good deal to the widespread agreement

---

[1] F. R. Tennant, The Origin and Propagation of Sin ("Hulsean Lectures," 1901-2; Cambridge: University Press, 1902), p. 132.

[2] Georgia Harkness, Conflicts in Religious Thought (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929), pp. 206 ff. Cf. McConnell, Is God Limited?, pp. 250 f.; Matthews, p. 236; W. R. Sorley, Moral Values and the Idea of God ("Gifford Lectures," 1914-15; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924), p. 483.

[3] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 254, actually says that God makes man's will free in such a way that He cannot coerce the response He desires.

[4] By resisting this logic Knudson seems to fall into confusion; he talks of "self-imposed limits" (pp. 255 f.) yet clings to the idea of "absolute power," able to subdue "all resisting forces" (pp. 273 f.).

that God is at least self-limited. It is now rare to find a theologian who affirms the absolute sovereignty of God with the fine free rapture common in the writings of classical Protestant thought. To that extent they have rendered very useful service in moralizing the doctrine of God.[1]

---

[1] A good summary of the problem is found in Riichiro Hoashi, *The Problem of Omnipotence in Current Theology* (Private Ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1918). The most famous literary treatment of the subject is probably that by H. G. Wells in his *God the Invisible King* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917). McConnell's comment is not quite fair, perhaps, but has some justification: "Mr. Wells has a duality which sins against unity without any of the theological attempts to satisfy unity. . . .A large part of Mr. Wells' ability is as a maker of gestures." (*Is God Limited?*, p. 60). The fact that Wells himself did not long hold to the faith stated here is suggestive.

On the philosophical side Gustav Fechner exerted great influence on William James, who in turn produced a very impressive statement of the case for a finite God in several of his writings, most notably *A Pluralistic Universe* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909). J. S. Bixler, *Religion in the Philosophy of William James* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1926), pp. 23 ff. Fechner's influence is illustrated also in the work of Charles Hartshorne, who emphatically repudiates the notion of a "finite God," but suggests rather an "absolute-relative" God who is the "self-surpassing surpasser of all"; cf. his review of *Religion of a Scientist: Selections from Gustav Theodor Fechner*, ed. and trans. by Walter Lowrie; (New York: Pantheon, 1946), in *Journal of Religion*, XXVII, 126 ff.; *Man's Vision of God*, chaps. i, ii. Another important philosophical treatment is given by W. P. Montague in his Terry Lectures, *Belief Unbound, A Promethean Religion for the Modern World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930).

Among recent theological advocates of a limited God Brightman is probably the most prominent, having offered such statements as *The Problem of God* and *The Finding of God*. McConnell's answer to "Is God Limited?" is a very moderate discussion, aimed at freeing God from moral obloquy while preserving as much of His traditional status as possible. Rannie Belle Baker's division of the personalists into those who advocate "an irrational, derogatory limit applied to God" (Brightman and Rashdall), and those favoring "a rational self-imposed limit" is suggestive; *op. cit.*, Part II, chaps. ii and iii. This question is also discussed, *infra*, in connection with Platonic dualism.

Georgia Harkness summarizes the objections to a genuinely finite God under three points: (a) such a theory puts nature outside the control of God but fails to explain the origin of nature ; (b) "a view which limits God's power over nature fails to account for the harmonious interplay of parts."; (c) most serious of all, religion requires an "Almighty God" to rely upon if it is to fulfill its task of inculcating faith, hope, peace, and confidence in men.[1] Of course, "Almighty" in the sense of "adequate" or "omni-competent" would presumably meet the latter requirement. Knudson states the case against a limited God in similar but slightly different terms. He also finds the basic objection to be its religious unsatisfactoriness; but insists further that a finite being cannot be self-existent and that a fundamental pluralism is "trifling with one's intellect" (here quoting Pringle-Pattison). Hence a finite God is just mythological and has no real cosmic significance.[2] A certain measure of philosophical prejudice is discernible here, but such objections would undoubtedly be shared by most theologians. It is to be hoped that some such view as that stated in the next chapter of this study is adequate both to solve the problems which produced the finite God theories and also to sustain that divine metaphysical perfection which is absolutely requisite.

---

[1] Harkness, Conflicts in Religious Thought, pp. 201-204.

[2] Knudson, pp. 256-259.

The good defined by Power.--A second major difficulty which follows from the selection of Power as a fundamental category for the nature of God is that it is necessary to define the very meaning of "good" by reference to His will. In a universe in which sheer divine Power is absolutely supreme and ultimate, what meaning could the term "good" have except to indicate what God approves? Zwingli forthrightly recognized this; and when Luther and Calvin stopped to consider the question, they had to agree. Thus it was that the "Augustinian strain of piety" spoke in Puritan New England:

> In our judging of the waies of *God*, we should take heed of framing a modell of our owne, as to thinke because such a thing is iust, therefore the *Lord* wils it: the reason of this conceit is, because we thinke that *God* must goe by our rule; we forget this, that every thing is just because he wils it; it is not that God wils it, because it is good or just. . . .What *God* wils is just, because he is the rule it self.[1]

In developing an ethical theory Brunner is faithful to his fundamental emphasis upon divine Power and so derives the whole meaning and content of obligation from the divine Will. "What God does and wills is good; all that opposes the will of God is bad. The Good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God."[2] "The only 'good' will," he writes in his *Dogmatics*, "is one that wills--utterly and entirely--only what God wills, and one which

---

[1] Perry Miller, *The New England Mind, The Seventeenth Century* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), p. 16, quoting John Preston.

[2] Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, trans. Olive Wyon (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), p. 53.

wills this--simply and utterly--because God wills it."[1] There is no principle, not even that of love, which furnishes a basis for ethics. God's will, His command, made known to us "in the secret place" is the sole ground for moral action.[2]

Criticism of the definition of good by Power.--The convenience of this view that it is possible to derive an intelligible notion of the meaning of "good" and "right" directly from the sheer fiat of God is evident. It means, as Zwingli saw, that God may be known to be good by *definition*. Yet this neat scheme will scarcely stand critical examination. Socrates' criticism of it is preserved in Plato's dialogue, Euthyphro, where Socrates insists that it makes no sense to define "right" in terms of the approval of the gods. The right must have a character, an essence or Form, by virtue of which it is *right*. Such a character or quality cannot intelligibly be identified with the quite different fact of divine approval.[3]

The situation in this case was complicated by the presumption of a polytheistic religion; but Kant made essentially the same judgment, against the background of Christian monotheism. Of his two major objections to the idea that it is the will of God simply *as* will or Power that defines the

---

[1] Brunner, *Doctrine of God*, p. 166.

[2] Brunner, *Divine Imperative*, p. 117.

[3] *Works of Plato*, III, 65 ff. Cf. A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, pp. 146 ff.

good, the first is essentially that of Socrates. As Kant puts it, "How do we know the divine will?"[1] If we follow the injunction to search the Scriptures we find that they give only general guidance for moral action. There are many specific problems in the course of each day for which no particular divine command can be discovered. The extremes to which exegesis and interpretation were forced to go in perhaps the most notable experiment in all history in deriving the meaning of the good solely from the revealed will of God--that of rabbinic Judaism--are well known.[2] The full-blown structure of Jewish law and its criticism by Jesus and Paul constitute a sufficient refutation of the idea that the meaning of "good" can be derived simply from the divine will. But on the basis of a thoroughgoing voluntarism, i.e., a definition of God primarily in terms of Power or will, the only alternative to this impossible assumption, that a detailed specification of the right for every particular situation has been given, is the contention that God does all; and whatever is, by virtue of that fact, is right.[3] This makes the very notion of ethical judgment lose all meaning, for terms which apply equally well to anything whatsoever are useless for discrimination and under-

---

[1] Immanuel Kant, Lectures on Ethics, trans. Louis Infield (New York: The Century Co., n.d.), p. 40.

[2] Paul Ramsey, Basic Christian Ethics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), chap. ii offers a convenient summary and criticism of Jewish legalism.

[3] Cf. the well-known lines of Pope, from his "Essay on Man," "One truth is clear: whatever is, is right."

standing.[1]

This notion also leads to the deep theological puzzles encountered in our study of Luther and Calvin, for it suggests the idea of two wills in God. But then which will defines the good? When God commands all men to be chaste, but at the same time leads some to commit adultery, is it the chastity or the adultery which is thereby rendered good? Normally the thinkers in this tradition have affirmed that it is the revealed command which defines the content of the good so far as we are concerned. But on the principle that actions speak louder than words it might just as cogently be argued that it is the secret and efficacious will of God which offers the real criterion. Socrates was right. It ultimately leads only to nonsense to try to derive the very meaning of goodness from the unknown content of an hypothetical divine will. If the term good has no intrinsic quality by which it may be identified without reference to a divine command, then for all practical purposes the term becomes useless and the whole attempt to find moral as well as metaphysical perfection in God becomes chimerical. It is in fact the general character of the acts of God, or it is the fundamental principles discerned in His revealed law, which become the basis for meaningful definitions of good

---

[1] Cf. Matthews' comment, p. 106, "By abstracting the concept of sovereignty or power and making God practically equivalent to this idea, Calvin really destroyed the validity of moral distinctions." It is doubtful if Calvin actually did go quite this far; but the fact remains that any theology which does make power the virtual definition of God robs moral terminology of meaning.

and right. But as soon as this occurs a standard has been set up by which, in principle, even the acts of God can be judged.[1]

This leads to a second difficulty which Kant discerned in the attempt to derive the very meaning of good from the divine will. If, he says,

> we do as God has commanded because He has commanded it and because He is so mighty that He can force us to it, we act under orders, from fear and fright, not appreciating the propriety of our actions and not knowing why we should do as God has commanded nor why we should obey Him. Might cannot constitute a vis obligandi. Threats do not impose an obligation, they extort.[2]

The point is clear and is reinforced with the testimony of conscience. If God is good only in the sense that He has a will, we could hardly be obligated to subordinate our wills to His--without some other and more ultimate principle which makes it right for all created beings to do so. This is the tacit presupposition of much of the talk about the absolute freedom of the Creator. "Because God is Lord, because the creation derives its life from Him alone, thus because it belongs wholly to Him, His will is its law."[3] This lan-

---

[1] This universal tendency is reflected in the contrary impulse to identify God with Order rather than with Power as a primary factor; and this strand in the tradition of theology is discussed in our next section. Cf. the interesting discussion by Bowman of the tendency in all religions to move from a personal, voluntaristic orientation to a kind of impersonalism framed in ethical or rational terms; Archibald Allan Bowman, Studies in the Philosophy of Religion, ed. with introduction by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1938), II, chap. xv.

[2] Kant, Lectures on Ethics, p. 41.

[3] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 277 (italics ours).

guage in itself shifts the appeal from the sheer principle of will or Power to that of a principle of right.

Yet another consideration may be adduced here concerning the contention that divine Will or Power makes right. We might grant that in the first instance God was entirely free to command any principle or set of principles whatever as defining the meaning of good. He might have decided to make either mercy or cruelty right. But once He had willed the rightness of mercy He could not possibly shift His will arbitrarily and make cruelty right. He could not, that is, if He were to be self-consistent; and none of the theologians who have exalted divine power to the highest degree has ventured to argue that God must be so free as to act or will simply from whim, from impulse, from arbitrary caprice. Nor, indeed, could this rationally be argued. As has been frequently pointed out, for "God" to be anything at all He must be a determinate being. But the very idea of determinateness involves the necessity of some degree of character, of consistent purpose, of constancy of act and will.[1]

---

[1] Knudson, p. 270, puts the matter well: In "giving direction to the divine will the divine nature may be said to limit it. But without such a limiting nature, God would not be God. He would be sheer emptiness. Limitation in the sense of definiteness of nature is of the very essence of being." Cf. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 183: "God is limited by His very determinateness, not an indeterminate Absolute in whom all differences are lost." Also, Matthews, p. 236: "God's action must be limited by His character as Rational and Love." Mackintosh, Christian Apprehension of God, pp. 207, 210: "An omnipotent being. . .who in the most literal sense was 'capable of anything'. . .would not deserve the name of God, but rather be comparable to an infinite mass possessed of velocity without direction." The discussion of God and moral norms later in this chapter is pertinent here.

Ultimately, then, the very existence of God makes impossible the definition of good in terms of His Will.[1]

Conclusion: the inadequacy of Power.--This long excursus into ethical theory and the semantics of moral terms has been an essential part of an examination of the possibility of making Power a central category for the nature of God. That such Power, majesty, might, and sovereignty constitute an essential element in an adequate doctrine of God is not for a moment disputed. But that we can begin with the attribute of Power and working consistently from it make it the criterion for whatever else is said about God, seems highly doubtful. Particularly is it impossible to develop a unity of metaphysical and moral perfection with Power as its basis.

The Category of Order

The foregoing investigation of the category of Power as primary in God is instructive in its implications. It shows that for moral significance to be preserved, another factor must be recognized as at least equally basic. That fact is Order--consistency, character, determinateness, the notion of a standard or norm or law. It is connected with the general idea of reason and logical order.

The metaphysical significance of these elements is

---

[1] It has, of course, been urged that God is not a "being" and does not exist, being beyond essence and existence. This is the view of Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 204 ff. But this involves a doctrine of God which Tennant and Knudson, along with the vast majority of Christian theologians, are at pains specifically to reject.

indisputable and obvious. Inscribed over the doorway of the greatest center of learning in the ancient world was the motto, "Let no one enter here who is ignorant of geometry."[1] The vision of modern science is well expressed in the apostrophe of one of its great founders, Kepler, to God as "the Creator, the source of all wisdom, the everlasting approver of order, the eternal and superexistent geyser of geometry and harmony."[2]

The Importance of Order in Christian Thought

The dynamism of Hebrew thought and the ecstatic spirit of primitive Christianity were not unduly enamoured of Order, yet even in the Bible its necessity is recognized. God created by forming a world from chaos and a man from the shapeless dust of the earth.[3] He shows his power in the ordering of the heavens.[4] And Paul is constrained to remind his converts that since "God is not a God of confusion but of peace,"[5] all things ought to "be done decently and in order."[6]

It was this factor which Hooker put at the very heart of his doctrine of God, whose "being is a kind of law

---

[1] Plato's Academy. Cf. Taylor, Plato, chap. xix.

[2] Johannes Kepler, The Harmonies of the World, Bk. V, 9, trans. Charles Glenn Wallis, in Great Books of the Western World, Robert Maynard Hutchins, editor-in-chief (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), XVI, 1050.

[3] Gen. 1, 2:7.

[4] Isaiah 40:26.

[5] I Cor. 14:33.

[6] I Cor. 14:40.

to His working."[1] This idea is prominent in the chief spokesmen for medieval orthodoxy. Aquinas, for example, says that the "whole community of the universe is governed by Divine Reason," which is immutable and eternal. It is not that God is subject to law or some structure of Order, but rather that "the Divine Nature or Essence are. . .the eternal law itself."[2]

The Platonic Use of Order

In view of the very many factors which drive the mind seeking for a fundamental category back from that of Power to that of Order, it is worth pausing briefly to note the classic statement of this idea in Plato.

The sole primacy of Order.--Plato's first impulse was to make the category of Order decisively ultimate. It is the intelligible world of pure Order and structure which is more real, more important and more perfect than the phenomenal world of change, becoming, and decay. In the great central passage of Book VII of the Republic, Plato speaks of the unity of this realm of Forms in terms of the unity of all value, using the symbol of the "Idea of the Good." But just here his doctrine takes a surprising turn:"The idea of good. . .is also inferred to be the universal author of all things beautiful and right, parent of light and of the lord of light in this visible world, and the immediate

---

[1] Hooker, Laws, I.2, p. 61.

[2] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II.I.91.1; 93.4.

source of reason and truth in the intellectual."[1] That is, Plato here makes the ultimate principle of Order an ontological principle of Power. It is the source of all reality as well as the unity of all structure. This affirmation of the unity of the ideal and the real, of the realm of Order (the intelligible and just and normative) and of Power or creative energy, was in some respects his supreme vision. This element helped make his thought readily assimilable to Christian doctrine, with its creator God. It was, however, a faith which he apparently could not sustain and which in later writings he had to modify.[2]

The reason for this modification is evident. There is nothing in the idea of Order as such which conveys the further implication of Power. Order, structure, law is the epitome of the static and immutable. The realm of Forms is derived in the first instance by abstraction from the living processes of history and experience, and so necessarily it must end up as a set of lifeless abstractions. From Forms alone no coherent account of the actual world of time and change, birth, growth, and death can be given. The great unsolved problem left by Plato was, as Aristotle saw, that of getting the Forms into living and effective relation with the real world.[3] Aristotle's well-known solution was

---

[1] Republic, VII, 517 in Works of Plato, II, 269.

[2] Cf. Demos, chap. iii on the Good, and p. 71, n. 6, for discussion of the contention that the doctrine in the Republic was not fully characteristic of Plato's thought.

[3] Metaphysics, I, 9 .991a8 ff., Works of Aristotle, pp. 707 f.

to posit a genuinely Platonic God, an Unmoved Mover, the completely transcendent unity of all the Forms, and thus Reason thinking Itself; but to add an immanent energy in the world which worked through all phenomenal realities, causing them to seek to fulfill their nature by conforming themselves as closely as possible to their appropriate Form as it subsists in God.[1] Greater metaphysical adequacy was thus achieved insofar as the reality of the elements both of structure or Order, and of Power, as represented in life, motion, and becoming were accounted for. But the price was a radical divorce of Power from Order, and a God who in the practical and effective sense was no God at all. Nevertheless, this solution achieved great historical significance. It was not entirely dissimilar to the solution developed by Neoplatonism which also markedly affected Christian thought.[2]

Platonic pluralism.--Plato's thought, however, moved on from the stage represented in the Republic to another view which took fuller account of the complexities of experience. His more typical doctrine embodied a plurality of ultimate factors rather than the sole supremacy of the category of Order.[3] Perhaps the most notably influential

---

[1] Metaphysics, XII, 6-10; Works of Aristotle, pp. 877 ff.

[2] W. Windelband, A History of Philosophy, trans. James H. Tufts (2d ed.; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914) pp. 244 ff.

[3] Cf. the fact that what is perhaps the most influential metaphysical system of this century, that of Whitehead, explicitly uses the Platonic factors and refers in particular to the Timaeus; Alfred North Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), chap. viii, pp. 354, 366, etc.

exposition of this pluralism is set forth in the Timaeus. The metaphysical picture there is familiar: it involves primarily (a) a realm of Forms, (b) the active agency of God, and (c) the primal material from which the world is formed. The source of Power is the Demiurge, God, who shapes the primary substance or stuff of the "Receptacle" in accordance with the norms and models provided by the eternal Forms.[1] Elsewhere the same factors are represented in slightly varying relations and with differences in terminology. The category of Power or energy is also assigned at times to the factor of Soul (psyche).[2] Or again it is connected with the power of love as desire for the good, most eloquently described in the Symposium.[3] The scheme of the Timaeus is quite congruent with the most developed expression of Plato's theology in Book X of the Laws.[4] Here again God is the "best soul," shaping the sensible order after the pattern of the Forms which He contemplates.[5]

---

[1] Cornford, pp. 33 f., 39 f.

[2] Gilson, God and Philosophy, p. 28, points out that the idea of "soul" and of "god" almost coalesce for Plato. This helps account for his rather baffling ambiguity on the question of monotheism vs. polytheism. Cf. the discussion by Taylor, Plato, pp. 491 f.

[3] Symposium, 201-12; Works of Plato, III, 330 ff.

[4] Plato, Laws, trans. R. G. Bury ("Loeb Classical Library"; London: William Heineman, 1926), II, 297 ff.

[5] Cf. Taylor, Plato, pp. 489 ff.

Platonic Pluralism in Christian Theology

Thus Plato identified God with the category of Power but made a category of Order, in accord with which He carries on His activity, at least coordinate with Him, if not superior to Him. This view has had repeated expression in Christian theology. A reminiscence of it is preserved in the logical Realism which was long considered the only acceptable basis for orthodox thought.[1] In more recent decades Paul Elmer More has given it notable and persuasive re-expression in his Sceptical Approach to Religion.[2] It is also reflected in Brightman's A Philosophy of Religion. All experience, he asserts, "is a structure that includes, in every phase of it, some activity, some rational form, and some brute fact."[3] Translated into theological terms, "our experience of activity would be evidence for the cosmic will of God; our experience of 'forms' would be evidence for his uncreated eternal reason; and our experience of brute fact would be evidence for his uncreated non-rational content."[4] Brightman specifically asserts that "reason must be coeternal with the will of God," and that this reason is the counterpart of the pattern of the Timaeus.[5] This faithfulness to

---

[1] Temple, Foundations, p. 224.

[2] Paul Elmer More, The Sceptical Approach to Religion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934).

[3] Brightman, Philosophy of Religion, p. 319.

[4] Ibid., p. 321.

[5] Ibid., n. 28.

the Platonic pluralism constitutes a major difficulty with his theory, considered as an attempt to express a monotheism based on personal idealism.[1] Another contemporary variation on this same Platonic theme is found in The Creator and the Adversary by Edwin Lewis. Lewis' three primary factors are "God, the Adversary, and the residue."[2] The "residue" seems to be a kind of "receptacle" or prime matter; the Adversary is a "discreative" element, irrational, immoral, destructive. God, then, embodies both Order or Form and creative energy.[3] Lewis' preoccupation with the problem of evil has produced a kind of dualism which is probably less adequate metaphysically than Plato's original scheme, but it shows the continuing suggestiveness of the latter.

Implications of Atonement Theories

Another familiar example of the importance of Order in the theological tradition is afforded by the doctrine of the atonement. In its most familiar forms, so far as Western Christianity is concerned, it represents the attempt to explain how God can be merciful to sinners and at the same

---

[1] Baker, pp. 157 ff., makes this criticism. Brightman insists that the Pattern and Receptacle are in God; but he hardly offers an adequate explanation of how this is so; cf. Brightman, Philosophy of Religion, p. 339.

[2] Edwin Lewis, The Creator and the Adversary (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948), p. 141.

[3] Ibid., pp. 143 ff. There is a curious similarity here to the three "causes," form, privation, and matter of Aristotle's Metaphysics XII. 2, 1069b 34 ff.; Works of Aristotle, p. 873.

time maintain His own perfect justice. Thus, as Ritschl points out, it starts off with the assumption of an antinomy in God. While His mercy impels Him to redeem mankind, His justice must be satisfied. Hence God's "act of grace is made subordinate as means to the Divine justice."[1]

This issue was long in contention in medieval theology. Schoolmen like Hales, Bonaventura, and Aquinas held that God was free to will the character of the satisfaction made for sin, whereas Anselm argued that retributive justice was necessary. Even the Westminster Assembly of Divines debated the issue. In order to uphold the absolute omnipotence of God some held that retributive justice was only a relative necessity, whereas others maintained it to be absolute.[2] In all of this, however, the fundamental idea was still maintained that somehow God Himself must come to terms with an absolute norm of justice. Thus the orthodox tradition actually limited the Power or free sovereignty of God in favor of an abstract factor of Order, i.e., "justice." It was Socinianism which clung resolutely to a less dualistic view of God in which freedom was fully maintained.

> 'There is no such justice in God,' says Socinus, 'as requires absolutely and inexorably that sin be punished, and such as God himself cannot repudiate. There is indeed a perpetual and constant justice in God; but this is nothing but his moral equity and rectitude, by virtue

---

[1] Albrecht Ritschl, Justification and Reconciliation, The Positive Development of the Doctrine, trans. edited by H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900), pp. 264, 267.

[2] William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), I, 378 ff.

> of which there is no depravity or iniquity in any of his works.[1]

More recently, it is instructive to find such a creative and original thinker as Bushnell expressing the conviction that propitiation is in some sense indispensable even while he is endeavouring to replace the old rigid doctrines of the atonement with a more living and moral one.[2]

Difficulties in a Dualism of Power and Order

Although Plato's fundamental insight into the metaphysical significance of the category of Order has thus been developed in a multitude of ways, it has seldom been acceptable to theology in its pluralistic form. The picture of a realm of Norms or Ideas, an independent principle of Justice or Law, standing over against God and constraining His will and action, has generally been rejected, for at least two chief reasons.

An independent realm of Order unthinkable.--One reason is the difficulty of making any real sense out of the idea of an independently existing or subsisting factor of Order or realm of Forms. This was one of the chief targets of Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic teaching.[3] Aristotle also made much of the question as to what role the

---

[1] Shedd, I, 378, quoting Socinus, Prelectiones Theologicae, XVI.

[2] Horace Bushnell, Forgiveness and Law, Grounded in Principles Interpreted by Human Analogies (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1874), p. 10 and chap. 1.

[3] Metaphysics, XIII. 2 , 1076b 13 ff.; Works of Aristotle, pp. 889 f.

Forms play--*how* they "participate" in existent things (or vice versa; Plato does not state the case very explicitly).[1] In the same fashion, Aquinas argued that Plato's doctrine "appears to be unreasonable in affirming separate ideas of natural things as subsisting of themselves."[2] Tennant speaks for the empirical temper in criticizing the notion that there are laws of thought which are "valid independently of God as well as of the world, and impose themselves upon Him as well as upon ourselves with necessity." This realm of Order, he says, exists not outside of God but *in* Him by virtue of his necessarily having a determinate, i.e., an ordered and orderly nature.[3] Similarly, Georgia Harkness argues that we must recognize the truth at which Plato was aiming, that values and truths are stable, independent of any arbitrary will, eternal; but then adds that

> only persons can be wise or good: values cannot float about the universe as ethereal entities residing in no mind. Only a Supreme Person can be all-wise or all-good--the ground and goal of all the values worth striving for. If values are cosmic yet personal, they must be grounded in a personal God.[4]

It is partly for this reason that Tillich denies the difference between potentiality and actuality in God. In this way, he feels, the problems posed by the idea of a realm of essences, of patterns or Order, as a "duplicate of reality,"

---

[1] Cf. Phaedo, 100; Symposium, 201 ff., *Works of Plato*, III, 246 f., 329 ff.

[2] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. 6. 4.

[3] Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, II, 187.

[4] Harkness, *Conflicts in Religious Thought*, pp. 141-147. Cf. Matthews, p. 38.

a puzzling second world existing alongside the real one, are solved.[1]

Pluralism destroys the primacy of God.--A second major objection to setting up a sphere of Order independent of God is that this destroys the fundamental Christian affirmation of the ultimacy, and the sole ultimacy, of God. It was the "truth that God is the One who determines all things and is determined by none" which made the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* a major factor in the development of Christian theology.[2] A view like Plato's, says Farmer, denies "that God is the sole ultimate reality, from whose creative will *all* things depend and draw their being, and to whom we can *wholly* commit ourselves in obedience and trust: for it implies that there is some other realm of being over against, and higher than, God."[3]

The Element of Order is *in* God

The force of these considerations has led most Chris-

---

[1] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 254 f. Cf. the criticism of this view by Charles Hartshorne, *Theology of Tillich*, p. 193, and his own solution which defines unactualized essences as simply more or less general or indeterminate existence, and identifies actuality with definiteness.

[2] Brunner, *Creation and Redemption*, p. 9. Cf. his sketch of the doctrine of creation, pp. 36 ff. Cf. also Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 253 f.; Farmer, pp. 109 f., where the author's primary opposition is directed at the notion of God's working with an original uncreated material and not so explicitly against the idea of a realm of independent Order, of patterns or values.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 119; cf. Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, pp. 107 f.

tian theologians to the view that this pervasive element of Order, the factor of form, of law, and of structure is not independent of God, over against Him, but rather *in* His own nature. This is to return to the view which Hooker expressed in such a masterly way, along with many other thinkers. For Augustine the Word of God, His *Logos*, was the idea of the world, its plan and purpose, similar to the Platonic Ideas but single.[1] For the medieval theologians, the divine law, "identified with God's reason, is itself identified with God."[2] Leibniz, who was a bridge between medieval and modern thought and one of the most theologically influential philosophers of all western history, put this notion in classic form. Referring to the scheme of the Timaeus, he said,

> God will be the Understanding; and the Necessity, that is, the essential nature of things, will be the object of the understanding, in so far as this object consists in the eternal verities. But this object is inward and abides in the divine understanding. And therein is found not only the primitive form of good, but also the origin of evil: the Region of the Eternal Verities must be substituted for matter when we are concerned with seeking out the source of things.[3]

A representative of Protestant scholasticism, Shedd,

---

[1] Tolley, p. 113, citing *In Joan. evang.*, Tr. I, 13, 16 f. Cf. Gilson's description of the "Augustinian doctrine of a God who knows all things, both actual and possible, by knowing his own eternal Ideas, and who knows his Ideas by knowing his own substance"; *God and Philosophy*, 92.

[2] Gilson, *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 334, 158 ff. Cf. the discussion of Duns Scotus' doctrine in Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot*, pp. 379 ff.

[3] G. W. Leibniz, *Theodicy, Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*, trans. E. M. Huggard, ed. with introduction by Austin Farrer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), pp. 135 f.

affirms, "God is not under law, nor above law. He is law."[1] In the same spirit Tennant says, "The sum of eternal truths becomes the mode of God's being and activity."[2] Knudson agrees:

> Truth and right are grounded in the divine nature. . . . We could not regard them as made or unmade by the divine will. . . .Yet they are not external authorities to which the divine will must bow. They have no objective existence. They inhere in the divine nature and are laws of the Divine Being.[3]

Approaching the issue from the side of moral theory, Sorley points out the objective validity which men recognize in laws and values, and then asks: "How could this eternal validity stand alone, not embodied in matter and neither seen nor realised by finite minds, unless there were an eternal mind whose thought and will were therein expressed?"[4]

While strongly concerned to maintain divine freedom, Hodge sees the factor of Order in God in essentially the same way. "God is not subject to any law out of Himself. . . .He is a law unto Himself."[5] Brunner is likewise concerned to maintain the primacy of divine freedom and will. Yet he goes so far as to admit that the logos of reason "is not alien to the Word of God, but is included within it."[6] A modern Roman Catholic and a modern Protestant philosophical

---

[1] Shedd, I, 362.

[2] Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 188.

[3] Knudson, p. 270. [4] Sorley, p. 349.

[5] Hodge, I, 414.

[6] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 282 f. Cf. the discussion of the logos in Revelation and Reason, pp. 311 ff.

theologian unite in summing up this view of the matter.

> Once God has determined upon creating a world, His own moral perfection requires that He should realize the idea in a fitting manner. . . .Thus God is bound by His wisdom and goodness to ordain particular things to the ends of the whole world of His choice, and the whole world to His own glory.[1]

Conclusion: Both Order and Power Essential

At this point we find ourselves in almost exactly the same position as that to which we were brought by the previous section concerned with the category of Power. Since an analysis of Power had shown its inadequacy as a primary concept, an element of Order, of reason or law or structure, seemed necessary in order to unify the metaphysical excellence of God with His moral perfection. This conclusion suggested an exploration of the possibilities in the category of Order. Now we find that Order alone is also quite insufficient to serve as a basis for an adequate doctrine of God. It is only as the element of structure, of determinateness, or perhaps more precisely of character, in a living, active God that Order performs its proper function. Beginning with either element as primary we are led irresistibly to the conclusion that a unity of both is necessary.

Remaining difficulties.--This seems self-evident enough, only a mouse of common-sense after the labor of a mountain of argument. But the unity of these two factors is far from self-evident. What is there about either which

---

[1] Ferré, p. 248, quoting Wilhelm and Scannell, A Manual of Catholic Theology (Benziger, 1909), p. 232.

actually implies the other? What real ground is there for believing that God must exhibit them both, apart from other considerations which are not involved in the idea of these categories themselves? Simply to hold together these two factors because each one by itself is inadequate does not advance us beyond the old tangles of justice *vs.* mercy in God, or will *vs.* wisdom.

In another way Power and Order, even in combination, are inadequate. For there is nothing in the nature of Order as such, even when informed or energized by Power, which provides intrinsically for *moral* excellence. Perhaps the clearest illustration of this fact is provided by the doctrine of *karma* in Indian religious thought. Here every slightest act and thought contributes its share to the total fate which each living being provides for itself. Retribution is exact, perfect, and completely inescapable. Nor is the element of Power lacking, for such an enormous engine of irresistible destiny suggests infinite energy at work within it.[1] And yet what mind which has been touched with the Christian intuition of moral excellence could agree that the perfection of goodness is embodied in this pitiless, impersonal, abstract, and terrible system? A God who simply embodied this principle of retribution would be worthy of our respect, perhaps, and of our fear; but it seems hard to believe that He would compel our reverence, our adoration, and our love.

---

[1] S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923), I, 440-461.

For several reasons, then, we cannot accept either the category of Power or of Order, nor even the two together, as sufficient to provide the unified and moral doctrine of God for which we are searching. Separately they are inadequate. They provide no real principle by which they are to be united. And even if they did, moral perfection would not follow from the intrinsic nature of these factors alone.

The Category of Being

Historical Significance

Although the categories or root-metaphors of Power and of Order have had immense influence, probably neither has been as often used as a basis for the doctrine of God as has a third category to which we now turn. This is the concept of Being. At the very outset of the adventure of Greek thought Parmenides seems to have experienced the curious phenomenon of "ontological shock,"[1] which has generated so much later metaphysics and theology, and to have found that there is "only one Way left to be spoken of, namely that It is."[2]

After Parmenides the man who has been called "The Philosopher" by centuries of Christian thinkers, and still today continues to exert his sway over the theology of a great church, likewise defined the proper object of meta-

---

[1] The term is Tillich's, Systematic Theology, I, 113.

[2] Francis Macdonald Cornford, Plato and Parmenides, Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides, trans. with an Introduction and a running Commentary (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950), Frag. 8, 1-6, p. 35.

physical inquiry as "Being."[1] It was the fundamental notion of "substance," that which underlies and constitutes the reality of all particular existences, which preoccupied Aristotle in his most general speculations. Here is a category which is as fundamental and unchanging as Order, and at the same time it seems to have the concreteness, the palpable *realness* which our rich, thick, quantitatively as well as qualitatively determined experience demands.

Being in Roman Catholic thought.--Roman Catholic theology focussed on this category of Being as expressing the "metaphysics of Exodus." "I AM THAT I AM," said its God, who was a "pure Act of existing."[2] The great point at issue between all Greek thought (together with the modern thought which repudiated medieval philosophy) and Catholic thought is located by Gilson precisely at this point: "On the Greek side stands a god who is doubtless the cause of all being, including its intelligibility, efficiency and finality--all, save existence itself; on the Christian side a God Who causes the very existence of being."[3] This preoccupation with existential Being is exhibited by Aquinas, who began his *magnum opus* with proofs for the *existence* of God;[4] who defined the nature of the most fundamental category in the dictum,

---

[1] Metaphysics, IV. 1, 1003a20 ff., *Works of Aristotle*, pp. 731 f.

[2] Gilson, *God and Philosophy*, pp. 40, 51.

[3] Gilson, *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, p. 81.

[4] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.2.

"A thing is perfect in proportion to its state of actuality";[1] and who affirmed that God is the existence of all things.[2] In the same spirit Maritain begins his argument in his Preface to Metaphysics, 2300 years after Aristotle and 700 years after Aquinas: "The proper object of understanding is being."[3]

Being in Protestant thought.--In the Protestant tradition much of this same emphasis upon the category of Being is discernible. For Zwingli God was not only Sole Cause but actually Sole Being, the substance of all things. Even in Luther and Calvin this notion peeps out here and there, in spite of its conflict with their more usual modes of thought. Luther spoke of all creatures as being "masks of God" beneath which He hides Himself;[4] and Calvin admitted "that the expression, that nature is God, may be used in a pious sense by a pious mind," although he objected to it as tending to confound the deity with His works.[5] In the Protestant tradition it was Edwards above all who gave lyrical expression to this concept of God as the fullness of primordial Being.[6]

---

[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.4.1.

[2] Ibid., I.4.2., quoting Pseudo-Dionysius.

[3] Jacques Maritain, A Preface to Metaphysics, Seven Lectures on Being (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939), p. 4.

[4] Brunner, Creation and Redemption, p. 37, quoting WA 30.I.136.

[5] Calvin, Institutes, I, 69.

[6] Cf. his early "Of Being," Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selec-

Analysis of the Concept of Being

How suitable is this category of Being to serve as a basis for the concept of God? Hegel suggested that "mere Being, as it is a mere abstraction, is therefore the absolutely negative: which, in a similarly immediate aspect, is just NOTHING." And again, "saying that God is only the Supreme Being and nothing more. . .is really declaring him to be the same negativity."[1]

The validity of this assertion is suggested by the use of Being as a fundamental category by Paul Tillich. By this term he means something very different from what Roman Catholic thinkers intend, and from what men like Zwingli and Edwards evidently meant. God is not a real existent, the supreme example of what it means "to be" in the ordinary sense.[2] He is beyond existence and non-existence. Indeed, He represents both factors: He is not only the "creative" but also the "abysmal" ground of being.[3] What positive

---

tions, with Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes ("American Writers Series"; New York: American Book Company, 1935), pp. 18 ff.; and the mature "Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue," Works, I, 122 ff.

[1] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "The Logic of Hegel," trans. William Wallace, in Benjamin Rand, (ed.), Modern Classical Philosophers, Selections Illustrating Modern Philosophy from Bruno to Bergson (2d ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), chap. vii, A.87, p. 585. Cf. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 144.

[2] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 235 f.

[3] Ibid., p. 237.

meaning has this concept of "being-itself or the absolute"?[1]

Some illumination is provided by the statement that God is "the power of being in everything and above everything, the infinite power of being."[2] Here the symbolism of force, will, dynamics, seems to emerge as dominant. In existential terms it is God as the "power of being, resisting and conquering nonbeing" which constitutes the saving message of religion. Nothing less than an "almighty" God will do because a God who is merely "very mighty" cannot "resist nonbeing and therefore he cannot supply the ultimate courage which conquers anxiety."[3]

Yet after all Tillich clings to his symbol of Being as more fundamental than Power. It comprises both becoming and rest, becoming as an implication of dynamics and rest as an implication of form.[4] In short, he seems to use Being as a symbol to represent that ultimate and completely ineffable One or Absolute which philosophical mysticism and mystical philosophy have commonly posited as the final reality and identified with God where the theistic tradition made that word useful.[5] This results in a kind of highly symbolic agnosticism about the nature of God which makes difficult any

---

[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 239.

[2] Ibid., p. 236. [3] Ibid., pp. 272 f. [4] Ibid., p. 247.

[5] Cf. Randall, Theology of Tillich, pp. 160 f.: "What remains in doubt here is whether for Tillich 'being-itself,' the 'ground of being,' is an ontological, that is, a philosophical concept, or a theological symbol. . . .Ontology can find only the 'being' which is common to all particular and determinate beings. 'Being-itself,' in any other sense, seems to be a religious myth or symbol."

attempt to state a doctrine of His nature in terms relevant to the ordinary conception of the Christian message.

Even if this tendency of Being as such to dissolve into nothing be avoided, there is a question as to what can be meant by a supreme "existent" or Being. How can anything possess more of Being than any other entity--or more than all others put together?

God as supreme in "quantity" of Being.--One attempt to give meaning to the doctrine of God as essentially supreme in Being is suggested by the traditional attributes of "infinity" or immensity."[1] Because God is largest, most powerful, most pervasive He has more Being than any other entity. Something like this notion is quite discernible in the language of Zwingli. Yet it is difficult to see how the idea has any real significance. Size or greatness is one thing, but reality of existence is quite another. Is a cloud any more real than a diamond? An emperor than a baby? A nebula than a molecule?

Quantity of Being might also conceivably be correlated with longevity. The longer an entity exists the more of existence it possesses. God, as the one eternal existent,

---

[1] If "infinity" be taken in the literal or inclusive sense, that God is the unbounded All, then the doctrine of God dissolves into a sheer monism which is entirely incompatible with Christian thought. If interpreted in pluralistic terms, allowing other beings to exist besides God, it seems simply to mean "supreme size" or greatness or "immensity." There is also a third possible meaning of "infinity," i.e., qualitative richness of attributes. This will be discussed in sections to follow. Cf. Schleiermacher, pp. 210 f., and Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 264 ff.

is therefore supreme in Being. But this sounds dangerously mythical. Even if some meaning could be put into the correlation of quantity of Being with length of existence, the question would still arise as to why the entity of longer duration is supreme at any given moment to other entities equally existent at that moment. God may have existed long before me and will continue long after I am gone; but why does that make Him superior in Being just now, when I am called upon to worship Him? I do not worship an elephant or a redwood tree because of its superior longevity, nor is Methuselah high in the list of saints. Moreover, an interesting complication arises here on the assumption of the immortality of the soul; for if this be true, I have infinite longevity just as truly as God!

Sophistical as such argumentation may sound, it is worth testing out; for thought about God seems to have dealt all too often with such sophistries, based to a considerable extent upon the inadequately criticized use of metaphors.

We may safely conclude that the interpretation of Being in the "quantitative" sense, making God's uniqueness and supremacy consist in sheer "size" or duration of existence, will hardly do. God, as understood in terms of Christian insight, will surely be incomparably great, immense and pervasive, and also eternal, "the ancient of days." But His unique status as deity will hardly rest upon this fact.

God as supreme in "perfection" of Being.--Another and more subtle interpretation of the supremacy of God would

make it consist in the perfection of His Being. This also is a familiar idea in traditional theology. It is succinctly expressed in the scholastic notion of actus purus, i.e., the pure actuality of God in contrast to the mixture of actuality and potentiality which is characteristic of all other beings. The background of this idea is the Aristotelian notion of a hierarchy of existence ranging from a (hypothetical?) "prime matter" at the bottom of the scale to God at the top. The lowest level is characterized by pure potentiality; it is not anything, but it has the capacity to become something. The entire series is completed in God who is symmetrical with "prime matter" at the bottom; and hence is pure actuality, pure form, quality, character, completeness.[1]

It is clear in all this that actuality is conceived primarily in terms of form, or of a "perfection" which is absolutely finished, absolutely self-contained, absolutely unchangeable and immovable. Any capacity for change, motion, or further development would imply a remaining element of potentiality. Thus it is that for Aristotle--and for Aquinas--God is the Unmoved Mover.[2] Impassibility, immutability, eternity, simplicity are simply varying terms pointing to His static perfection of Being.

---

[1] Metaphysics, Bks. VIII and IX, Works of Aristotle, pp. 811 ff.

[2] Ibid., Bk. XII, chaps. 6 and 7, Works of Aristotle, pp. 877 ff. There is another notion of perfection also involved in all this, namely, the idea of perfect richness or inclusiveness of all qualities. It is to this element of

Of this notion, springing from Greek philosophical thought but exercising enormous influence in Christian theology, Martin Foss has given an effective criticism.[1] He points out, to begin with, that on this view the character of God's Being is simply thought, and specifically self-thought, aiming only at itself, "empty, useless and even meaningless."[2] Moreover, where Aristotle had confined the identity of form and content, aim and object of aim, to the completely transcendent being of God as Reason, in

> Christian philosophy under the spell of the Greek ideal of perfection--the frenzy of identity knows no limits and mounts to its highest peak: in God all is identical, all perfections are one (Aquinas, Descartes), essence and existence (Anselm, Aquinas, Descartes), the possible and the actual (Cusanus), the positive and the negative, God and the world (Scotus, Cusanus). . . .Indifference, or zero, is the last consequence of the frenzy of identity.[3]

Furthermore, God becomes in this way of thinking an object, a thing. Anselm's proof of the existence of God, based on the idea of perfection, calls God "id quo maius cogitari nequit." Likewise Aquinas proves God is perfect existence by arguing from the differing degrees of perfection in things, of which God is the most perfect.[4] Des-

---

richness of Being that much of the moving power of God is to be attributed. This aspect of the notion of Being is discussed in the next section, under the heading of Plenitude. But the two ideas cannot be sharply distinguished; they interpenetrate.

[1] Foss, The Idea of Perfection in the Western World. Cf. the comments of Matthews, pp. 102 f.

[2] Foss, p. 20.

[3] Ibid., pp. 23 f.

[4] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.2.3.

carte's God as an infinite "res cogitans" and Spinoza's infinite Substance are in the same tradition.[1]

To be sure, the inherent dynamism of the Biblical view of God introduces complexities into the picture even as envisaged by the Aristotelian schoolmen. This notion of a static actuality fails to do justice to the Christian insistence upon creativity and Power in God, not to speak of His personality or life.[2] In fact, it represents a virtual return to the ultimacy of the notion of Order which we have already seen to be inadequate.

God as Becoming.--It is more than the weight of Christian tradition or a prejudice against the idea of a static and impersonal perfection as ultimate which makes this whole view of Being unacceptable. In a powerful criticism of Tillich's doctrine of God Charles Hartshorne has put the case for the necessary ultimacy of the dynamic element in reality, of process or becoming as over against sheer fixed being.[3] Tillich gives the argument against the ultimacy of process in most persuasive form, by refusing to advocate sheer form, actuality, perfection as final, and by insisting that the polar elements of dynamics and form are primordial so far as our knowledge is concerned.[4] They are,

---

[1] Foss, p. 21. Cf. Temple, Foundations, p. 231, on the materialism of "substance" thinking in theology.

[2] Foss, pp. 51-53; Matthews, p. 104.

[3] Hartshorne, Theology of Tillich, pp. 168 ff.

[4] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 178 ff.

however, swallowed up ultimately in the inaccessible Beyond which is God, the Absolute.[1]

In reply Hartshorne points out the principle that "the togetherness of what-does-not-become-and-what-becomes itself becomes."[2] Thus reality in the inclusive sense coincides with process; and God, or reality itself, is process-itself. God as process can include all fixed being--and in the supreme case of God actually does so in three ways: (a) as immortal remembering, or objectifying all past events of process in all subsequent process; (b) as embodying the universal structures generic to process as such, the abstract constituents of all units of process; and (c) emergent structures as less abstract constituents of the process subsequent to their emergence. But while such fixed structures of being can perfectly well be included in a total process of becoming, no slightest bit of becoming can exist in a totality of fixed Being. A total process of motion can include elements of rest; but no entity can be said to be "at rest" if any element of motion enters at all into its career. "A total reality cannot be literally 'immutable' unless everything in it is immutable." But "a total process-up-to-now can very well be succeeded by a literally new total containing the old, and even something neither new nor old but eternal."[3]

---

[1] Ibid., pp. 245 ff.

[2] Hartshorne, Theology of Tillich, p. 184, (italics ours).

[3] Ibid., p. 169.

This argument is confirmed in ordinary experience. A day's life for any individual contains many relatively fixed elements--his name, his general appearance, a body of memories, habits, moments of more or less perfect inactivity, etc. But obviously the total experience is a process which includes these elements as special cases of the general character of becoming which constitutes its fundamental nature. It will be argued that the situation of an infinite Being is absolutely different from that of a finite being. God is the unmoving ocean on which the finite ships ply; therefore He is unmoved though all else moves.[1] But this involves the precarious assumption that nothing which occurs within God--or within His world, if the literally inclusive metaphors be rejected--makes any difference whatever to Him. Certainly this is not the case with the ocean which _is_ affected by the ships which furrow its surface. And certainly any God who is not sheerly inert, ignorant, unfeeling, and uncaring must be affected by what transpires in His world, or within His omnipresent Being.[2] Since the omniscience, love, activity, and concern of God are essential assumptions of all Christian thought (even when, as in the case of Aris-

---

[1] Cf. Gilson, _God and Philosophy_, p. 87: "The God of Saint Thomas was an infinite ocean of existence."

[2] Buber, p. 82, who is so often cited to support the notion of God as pure Subject, _actus purus_, says precisely the opposite: "You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything: but do you not know too that God needs you? . . .There is a becoming of the God that is. The world is not divine sport, it is divine destiny. There is divine meaning in the life of the world, of man, of human persons, of you and of me."

totelian or Neoplatonist theologies, it seems to be unaware of that fact), we may safely dismiss the contention that sheer perfection of Being is an adequate category on which to base a doctrine of God.[1]

Static perfection not moral.--Clearly this metaphysical perfection provides no ground for a moral aspect in deity. The utter indifference to all things human, which this idea involves is evident. Indeed, its champions quite frankly admit it. Under the control of this notion of perfection Gilson is led to a complete distortion of the biblical idea of God. "The Judeo-Christian God is certainly very different from the gods of Greek mythology," he writes; "He feels neither anger nor sorrow; His intimate life is not more troubled at our offences than gladdened at our praises. It is Aristotle rather than Homer who is in the right here"![2] But how a God who neither knows nor cares about anything which transpires in the life of man can possibly be understood as morally good it is quite impossible to imagine. All the Roman Catholic arguments on the point only end up in a reaffirmation of the metaphysical splendor of the kind of self-contained perfection which is here in question.[3] We conclude that the attempt to make Being the primary category

---

[1] The strong argument of McConnell for a real apprehension of time on the part of God seems to be ultimately an insistence upon this very point; cf. Is God Limited?, pp. 49 ff.

[2] Gilson, Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, p. 338.

[3] Cf. von Hügel, Essays and Addresses, II, 149 ff.

for a doctrine of God, understanding Being in terms of "perfection," is a failure.

Being as plenitude.--There is yet a third interpretation of the meaning of Being which has been at least equally influential in Christian thought about God. This idea concerns not the completeness or static "perfection" of God's Being, but rather its fullness or "plenitude." From such infinite inner abundance derives the creative activity of God. The history of this concept seems to go back to a crucial passage in the Timaeus of Plato:

> Let us, then, state for what reason becoming and this universe were framed by him who framed them. He was good; and in the good no jealousy in any matter can ever arise. So, being without jealousy, he desired that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself. . . .Desiring, then, that all things should be good and, so far as might be, nothing imperfect, the god took over all that is visible--not at rest, but in discordant and unordered motion--and brought it from disorder into order, since he judged that order was in every way the better.[1]

Cornford points out that this obviously means that the Demiurge did not grudge the world a perfection of order like his own and thus set to work to order the primordial chaos as best he could. Yet he admits that in the history of Platonism quite another view has been dominant, extending down even to so wise and critical a scholar as A. E. Taylor.[2]

In a brilliant study of the influence of Plato's in-

---

[1] Timaeus, 29D-30A, in Cornford, Plato's Cosmology, p. 33.

[2] Ibid., p. 34.

sights Lovejoy has traced the development of this notion of the overflowing plenitude of God's Being. Plotinus writes: "Seeking nothing, possessing nothing, lacking nothing, the One is perfect and, in our metaphor, has overflowed, and its exuberance has produced the new."[1] In the same vein the Pseudo-Dionysius who had such a great influence upon scholastic thought affirms, "Love which works good to all things, pre-existing overflowingly in the Good, . . .moved itself to creation, as befits the superabundance by which all things are generated."[2] In the twelfth century Abelard quoted from the Timaeus "that most true argument of Plato's," that "if there are things good which God fails to produce when he might have done so, or if he refrains from producing some things fit to be produced, who would not infer that he is jealous or unjust."[3] Aquinas, too, accepts the same idea, as Gilson points out: bonum est diffusivum sui et communicativum, "goodness is diffusive and communicative of itself," a formula which Gilson shows must be traced back through the axiom of the goodness of Being as such to the explanatory idea, ens est diffusivum sui et communicativum. (Being is diffusive and communicative of itself.)[4]

From the point of view of an ontology quite differ-

---

[1] Plotinus, The Ethical Treatises, Being the Treatises of the First Ennead. . ., trans. Stephen Mackenna (Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, n.d.), II, 16.

[2] Lovejoy, p. 68. [3] Ibid., p. 71.

[4] Gilson, Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, pp. 93-95, 104; cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.19.2. Sorley, p. 486, echoes this idea: "The fulness of his nature makes possible

ent from that of orthodox theology Tillich states this same idea:

> The divine life is creative, actualizing itself in inexhaustible abundance. The divine life and the divine creativity are not different. God is creative because he is God. Therefore, it is meaningless to ask whether creation is a necessary or a contingent act of God. . . .His aseity implies that everything which he is he is through himself. . . .Creation is not only God's freedom but also his destiny.[1]

So defined creativity would appear to be a hybrid category uniting Power ("the power of being" or the power of communicating being) with Order (the shaping, forming function which is primary in the Timaeus) without providing any ground for that unity. More important, it is doubtful if such creativity represents a principle of moral goodness. There is an ancient and influential opinion to the effect that being simply as being--existence as existence--is good.

---

the existence of finite beings who are other than himself."

This notion of creation as consisting in the "communication of being" is difficult. Gilson argues: Causality "means that something of the being of the cause passes into the being of that which undergoes the effect." This suggests, he thinks, a "philosophically precise statement of the idea of creation. To create is to cause being. If then each thing is capable of being a cause in the exact measure in which it is a being, God, Who is Being, must be able to cause being, and He must be the only one able to do it." *Spirit of Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 86, 90.

Without some rather finely drawn *distinctions* this last seems a *non-sequitur*. And what can it mean to "impart" being? Furthermore, Hartshorne points out that "the cause is *never* 'equal to the effect,' the latter always being the *richer*; the former, seen retrospectively, being a reduction of the latter to an abstract or incomplete version of itself"; Charles Hartshorne, "Whitehead's Idea of God," P. A. Schilpp (ed.), *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead* (Evanston: Northwestern University, 1941), p. 544.

[1] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 252.

Augustine taught, for example, that God as the supreme existence and at the same time the supreme good defines the character of all good; while non-existence, as the absolute contrary to God, defines the character of all evil, sin, or corruption.[1] This would seem to imply that the creation of existent being, as such, is good. But this brings us squarely up against the problem with which we have been wrestling: what is meant by Being? Surely the existence of evil things is as patent as the existence of good ones.[2]

The fact is that creativity as such is hard to distinguish from sheer Power.[3] It is God's power of self-existence, His aseity, which is one of His chief perfections in traditional thought.[4] His power of communicating existence by the effortless overflow of His own Being is an added splendor. Tillich's comment is suggestive:

> "The purpose of creation" is such an ambiguous concept that it should be avoided. Creation has no purpose beyond itself. . . .From the point of view of the creator, the purpose of creation is the exercise of his creativity, which has no purpose beyond itself because the divine life is essentially creative.[5]

This seems to express accurately the fundamental notion involved in simple creativity as such, the idea of an infinite

---

[1] Tolley, pp. 115 f.

[2] Cf. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 181.

[3] Cf. Foss, pp. 53 f.

[4] Cf. Knudson, pp. 263 f.; Shedd, I, 338; Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.2.3; Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 252.

[5] Ibid., pp. 263 f.

fountain of fecundity, gushing forth from the depths of the Absolute mystery, generously and blindly bringing Being into existence as the sun, in another favorite metaphor of traditional theology, generously and blindly sheds forth its light and warmth into a created world.[1] As Ferré suggests, however, it is not until creativity is fundamentally redefined in terms of love that adequate provision is made for selectivity, interest, and order in its workings.[2]

If we are correct in concluding that Being as overflowing plenitude amounts either to a hybrid category of Order plus Power, or to a specification and refinement of Power alone, we are justified in rejecting it as an adequate basis for a unified and fundamentally moral doctrine of God.

Being as Qualitative Fullness

There is at least one more way in which the category of Being can be understood. In contrast to mere "extent" of existence, or perfection, or creative plenitude, it may in some fashion be identified with qualitative richness of character. Kierkegaard noted that this is the only way in which to make sense of the language in which more or less of Being is spoken of:

> Factual existence is wholly indifferent to any and all variations in essence, and everything that exists participates without petty jealousy in being, and participates in the same degree. Ideally, to be sure, the case is quite different. But the moment I speak of being in the ideal sense I no longer speak of being, but of es-

---

[1] Cf. Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.4.2.

[2] Ferré, p. 27.

sence.[1]

How are we to understand and specify this notion of greater richness of quality or essence as amounting to increase in Being?

This idea is found in such Protestant theologians as Zwingli and Edwards, who suggest that *all* perfections, all good qualities, can somehow be simply included in the divine Being, as the totality of a plum pudding contains a dozen kinds of delectable morsels. Aquinas develops such an idea under the heading, "WHETHER THE PERFECTIONS OF ALL THINGS ARE IN GOD." Whatever perfections are found in the effects must exist in their effective cause and as "God is the first effective cause of things, the perfections of all things must pre-exist in God in a more eminent way." Second, since God is Himself self-subsistent existence "He must contain within Himself the whole perfection of being. . . .Now all created perfections are included in the perfection of being; for things are perfect, precisely so far as they have being after some fashion."[2]

This reasoning is not likely to appeal to a modern Protestant thinker. As we have seen, the idea that everything that is in its effects must be in the cause is far from self-evident, as is the idea that existence as such is

---

[1] Kierkegaard, p. 33, n.2. Cf. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology*, II, 147: "any 'thing' either exists or does not exist."

[2] Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I.4.2. Cf. Gilson, "A pure Act of existing, taken as such and without any limitation, necessarily is all that which it is possible to be"; *God and Philosophy*, p. 51.

"perfection." Nor does there seem to be validity in the plum pudding type of analogy, in which all values are crammed by sheer verbal force into the divine Being.[1]

Qualitative supremacy involves subjectivity.--A concrete lead is given our thought here by the analysis of the meaning of "good" which has recently been offered by A. C. Garnett. He begins by pointing out that goodness cannot belong to anything outside of and independent of experience, nor can it belong to a perceptual entity experienced. These are only instruments affecting the value of subjective response. The good must be "conscious life-activity that is positive in form and quality."[2] Now what can constitute that difference in degree between one such experience and another which is recognized in our evaluations of "good" and "better"? Intensity alone is an inadequate criterion, for it must be compensated by variety and change or it quickly becomes bad. More important than intensity of subjective activity is its complexity or degree of development. Subjective processes exhibit three levels: mere sense awareness; perceptual intelligence; and conceptual experience, a "level of thought which uses general terms and is capable of imagination and inference." Since this highest level of subjective processes also involves the lower--sensation, percep-

---

[1] Cf. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 145: "Idealised to the limit in all ways and respects at once, perfection becomes a bundle of contradictions or incompatibilities."

[2] Garnett, p. 144.

tual meaning, memories, and images--Garnett argues that in these there is actually more subjective activity than in the lower. "They actually contain more of that which is good, i.e., more subjective activity which is positive in form and quality."[1]

If this analysis be acceptable in its general principles, it affords a thread by which to make our way out of the labyrinth of difficulties constituted by the idea of Being. We have looked in turn at various interpretations of this category, seeking in them the basis for a unified concept of God as metaphysically and morally supreme. We were constrained to reject as inadequate the notion of divine Being as sheer "size" or extent of existence; as completeness or static perfection; as creative plenitude. But supremacy of Being in terms of subjective richness or quality seems to permit of intelligible interpretation, even to the extent of quantitative discrimination. This shifts the real emphasis in our thinking from the category of Being as such to the specific category of conscious Being, subjectivity, or consciousness. We must turn now to this fundamental notion in search of a basis for that satisfactory conception of God which we seek.

---

[1] Garnett, pp. 145 f.

CHAPTER IX

SYMPATHY AS A METAPHYSICAL CATEGORY

Page

- Love in the Theological Tradition 368
    - Problems in the Definition of God as Love 369
- Omniscience and Omnipresence 369
    - Divine Omniscience 369
        - Organic interrelatedness in nature
        - Omniscience in religious thought
        - Omniscience and foreknowledge
    - Divine Omnipresence 376
        - Divine immanence
        - Doctrine of the Holy Spirit
    - Divine Omniscience and Love 382
        - Knowledge involves Sympathy
- Sympathy and the Other Categories 390
    - Sympathy as Being 391
        - The categorial status of feeling
    - Sympathy as Order 398
    - Sympathy as Power 404
        - Causation
        - Other aspects of Sympathy as Power
- Sympathy as Metaphysical Excellence 412
- Conclusions 414

CHAPTER IX

SYMPATHY AS A METAPHYSICAL CATEGORY

Love in the Theological Tradition

At the end of the categorial analysis in the last chapter it was noted how readily both moral and ontological significance could be attached to the category of Being if it were transformed from the more or less abstract terms in which it has often been conceived into specifically subjective Being or consciousness. In view of the difficulties attaching to a simple theological personalism this discovery does not suggest a mere return to traditional affirmations about God as a person. It indicates rather a continuation of the categorial analysis, adopting now a fourth major element in the doctrines of God with which the tradition has confronted us: the category of Love.

All the theologians examined gave some recognition to the Biblical affirmation that God is Love. John Wesley made his entire doctrine of God conform to it. However, his literalistic Biblicism and his avoidance of speculative theological problems prevent our simply adopting his theology as final, valuable as it may be. From the rather different perspective of the twentieth century and its new resources in philosophical and theological understanding, together with keener logical tools and a greater freedom in exploring and

interpreting the documents of the Christian tradition, we need to ask how this category can be made to serve more adequately as a basis for a genuinely unified and religiously significant doctrine of God.

Problems in the Definition of God as Love

At the very outset we must face the fact that the term "Love" involves some serious difficulties for such an enterprise. It is so richly loaded with historical and emotional associations as to suggest either traditionalism or sentimentalism when used of God. Questions arise as to the suitability of applying to deity a term so specifically linked with human experience. Moreover, even in human experience Love means many things, and these diverse significations are not easily unified.[1] Most important is the fact that in the minds of many, including some of the distinguished theologians just studied, the Love of God is precisely what is most doubtful about Him. Is not a procedure which assumes divine Love vitiated from the start by avoiding the major issue? Thus it seems wise to proceed with caution, and to begin by seeking to ground our understanding of Love in terms of generally apprehensible insights regarding the nature of the world and the metaphysical attributes of God.

Omniscience and Omnipresence

Divine Omniscience

Organic interrelatedness in nature.--No single aspect

---

[1] Tillich, Systematic Theology, I, 280 f.

of modern scientific cosmology is more significant than its emphasis upon the intimate interrelatedness or universal relevancy which is being discovered throughout the structures and processes of the universe. A discerning philosopher has put the matter with poetic vividness:

> The universe is an organic whole, every part of which is directly or indirectly sensitive to, dependent upon, and capable of influencing, every other part. The plover, south of Capricorn, hears the call of the Labrador Spring while yet white Winter reigns, and starts out on her twelve thousand mile flight; the salmon in the sea is drawn to the breeding grounds of Maine and Scotland and Alaska; the compass-needle trembles at the influence of the distant pole; the moon draws the tides through two hundred and forty thousand miles of intervening space; light travels across the stellar universe; and through the power of gravity distant star greets distant star.[1]

That this pervasive relevance and sensitivity is the observable symbol of the universal presence of a divine being has long been a commonplace of philosophy, whether in the form of a Stoic logos or a Christian God. But for a time modern science chose to explore the possibilities in a more purely mechanical and atomistic approach to phenomena, seeing them in terms of discrete entities moving according to fixed laws in patterns of order that were externally imposed by a God "above" or "outside" the processes of nature. Newton chose such an approach, combining a mechanistic physics with a deistic theology: "*Deity* is the dominion of God not over his own body, as those imagine who fancy God to be the soul of the world, but over servants."[2] And yet Newton also pro-

---

[1] James Bissett Pratt, *Personal Realism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937), pp. 374 f.

[2] Isaac Newton, *Mathematical Principles of Natural*

vided the basis for a much more organic view, in this very passage. He said of God:

> By existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space. Since every particle of space is always, and every individual moment of duration is everywhere, certainly the Maker and Lord of all things cannot be never and nowhere. . . .He is omnipresent, not virtually only, but also substantially.[1]

Because the great scientist was so intent upon maintaining the gulf between God and man, he went on to comment that "as a blind man has no idea of colors, so have we no idea of the manner by which the all-wise God perceives and understands all things."[2] But surely we might conceive that God knows all things simply by being present to all things, literally and completely. He would thus know the world much as we know our own bodies, with the sureness and intimacy of an immediate sympathetic intuition.[3] J. E. Turner suggests just such an assimilation of this idea of universal interaction, the relevance or presence of all things to all things, to the theological concepts of omnipresence and omniscience, and cites in this connection statements by Jeans and Bridgman.[4]

To anyone familiar with the movement of thought in

Philosophy, trans. Andrew Motte, rev. Florian Cajori, in Hutchins, Great Books of the Western World, XXXIV, 370.

[1] Newton, p. 370. [2] Ibid., p. 371.

[3] It is true that our knowledge of our own bodies is far from perfect, but for the supreme case of a divine knowledge there seems no necessary reason to posit such a limitation. Deficiency of knowledge at this point is correlative with our finiteness.

[4] J. E. Turner, The Revelation of Deity (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), p. 134, n.2.

modern philosophy the fundamental idea suggested by this scientific confirmation of the universal relevance of all things will be seen as strikingly congruent with the speculations of a Leibniz in the seventeenth century[1] and of a Whitehead in the twentieth.[2] Thus, both scientific and philosophic thought suggest a universal interrelatedness, which in turn points to a divine omnipresence and omniscience when the idea of God is taken seriously.[3]

Omniscience in religious thought.--From the side of religion these same concepts have long been of central importance. In almost any description of the divine attributes there is some reference to the idea of the perfection of God's knowledge. The Bible is full of it:

---

[1] As, for example, in the Monadology; Leibniz, The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings, trans. with introduction and notes by Robert Latta (Oxford University Press, 1925), pp. 213 ff. The universal interrelationship is complicated by Leibniz's idea that the monads are windowless, which seems very gratuitous. Yet this accentuates all the more the role of God as the medium of relevance.

[2] most notably in Process and Reality, An Essay in Cosmology ("Gifford Lectures," 1927-8; New York: The Social Science Book Store, 1941), Part III, "The Theory of Prehension."

[3] Cf. the wonderful literary expression of this theme in Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov, trans. Constance Garnett (New York, The Modern Library, n.d.), pp. 380 f.: "The vault of heaven, full of soft, shining stars, stretched vast and fathomless above him. The Milky Way ran in two pale streams from the zenith to the horizon. The fresh, motionless, still night enfolded the earth.

. . . .

'Oh! in his rapture he was weeping even over those stars, which were shining to him from the abyss of space. . . There seemed to be threads from all those innumerable worlds of God, linking his soul to them, and it was trembling all over 'in contact with other worlds.'"

> He looks to the ends of the earth;
> Beneath the whole heavens he sees.[1]
>
> He knows the secrets of the heart.[2]
>
> There is no limit to his understanding.[3]
>
> The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
> Keeping watch on the evil and the good.[4]

> Before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.[5]

Omniscience is recognized likewise in the creeds and systematic formulations of theology.[6] For example, a representative of conservative Protestant thought writes: "This knowledge of God is not only all-comprehending, but it is intuitive and immutable. . . .The vast procession of events, thoughts, feelings, and acts, stands open to his view."[7] And a mediating representative of liberal Protestantism expresses the same view: "From this same wise, holy and loving God nothing is hid. He sees things as they are; their causes, their meaning, their end. He reads the hearts of men. Their

---

[1] Job 28:24.

[2] Psalm 44:21

[3] Psalm 147:5.

[4] Prov. 15:3.

[5] Heb. 4:13.

[6] Schaff, *Creeds*, III, 7, Augsburg Confession: God is "of infinite power, wisdom and goodness"; pp. 383 f., Belgic Confession of 1561: "perfectly wise, just, good"; p. 440, Scotch Confession of Faith, 1560: "ruled and guyded be his inscrutable Providence, to sik end, as his Eternal Wisdome, Gudnes, and Justice hes appointed them"; p. 487, Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England: "of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness." Whether "wisdom" in this common formula is equivalent to omniscience might be questioned; but its universal connection with Providence seems to require that God *know* all things as well as be rationally "wise," in order *to* make rightful disposition of the *particulars* which His providence rules.

[7] Hodge, I, 397.

secret thoughts are known to him."[1]

To be sure, there are problems in the notion of perfect divine knowledge. Older theologians were distressed by "the revolting idea that all the sins of men enter into the consciousness of God."[2] Yet this would seem to follow from the notion of omniscience. Knudson, too, feels the horns of this dilemma. God must be "touched with a feeling of our infirmities"; yet how can we believe that He has a "direct knowledge of our physical pain and suffering and other experiences that we cannot ascribe to him as an infinite and purely spiritual Being"? Indeed, how can He know our sense experience in general, since He has no sense organs? Knudson believes that a pantheistic confusion of the divine with the human would be involved in the view that "our experiences are also his and that he consequently knows them." Thus he simply falls back on the rather desperate device of attributing to God "modes of knowing that we cannot comprehend."[3]

Such difficulties, however, seem to spring chiefly from a combination of undue squeamishness and lack of imagination. Any sober attempt to think out the meanings of the immanence of God will show that He cannot be a prude![4] Nor is it necessary to hold that His knowledge of human experiences involves an identification of His consciousness with ours. It seems possible that His perfect knowledge of our

---

[1] Brown, p. 115

[2] Hodge, I, 396.

[3] Knudson, pp. 318 f.

[4] Cf. the section, infra, on Omnipresence.

experiences might include knowing them as ours. As Hartshorne points out, God must know the motivations and decisions of sinful men as well as they know them themselves; yet for God the evil of these experiences would be suffered, not shared; what was moral evil for the man would be aesthetic evil for God.[1] The human parent who knows most sensitively and perfectly the moral struggle in his child's mind is completely removed from any share in its moral evil just where he is most completely identified with the child in sympathy and understanding.

Omniscience and foreknowledge.--Another major difficulty in the idea of divine omniscience concerns the conflict between a perfect divine knowledge of the future, and human freedom.[2] The notion that God sees all things, including the future, in one synoptic and eternal glance, has roots far back in Biblical thought. One of the greatest prophets argued that the supremacy of the God of Israel over other divinities is shown most clearly in the fact that He alone has foreknown the future and caused it to be proclaimed.[3] Even though he does not himself accept the idea, Tennant acknowledges that it is precisely omniscience in the sense of "foreknowledge of human volitions, that theologians have

---

[1] Charles Hartshorne, "Santayana's Doctrine of Essence," in Schilpp, Philosophy of Santayana, p. 144.

[2] Knudson, pp. 318, 323 f.

[3] Isaiah 44:24-28; Isaiah 45:21. Prof. John H. Otwell called this motif in Second Isaiah to my attention.

been anxious to ascribe to God; and if this be not assured, they would care little for being allowed to call the divine knowledge of the past 'infinite.'"[1]

The question of foreknowledge is not, however, central to our concern here, for that is really an aspect of the problem of divine providence and of the freedom of creatures. Foreknowledge has been used to bolster up the idea of divine determinism; and conversely, the notion of a complete and immutable plan of God for every detail of cosmic history through all time is a necessary correlate of divine prescience. For if the future were in some degree indeterminate there would be, to that degree, no specific detail to know. On the other hand, if such detailed knowledge is had by God, it implies the fixedness of events in the divine mind. At a later point we shall deal with the problem of freedom. Here, however, it is with the really quite distinct notion of perfect divine knowledge of all existing reality that we are concerned.[2]

Divine Omnipresence

Correlative with this theological affirmation of divine omniscience and hardly to be separated from it either in fact or in thought is the doctrine of divine omnipresence.

---

[1] Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 267. Cf. Hodge, I, 397; Shedd, I, 346 f.

[2] Modern theologians quite often reject the notion of perfect foreknowledge; cf. Matthews, pp. 242 f.; Ferré, p. 58; McConnell, Is God Limited?, p. 125; Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 175 f.; also Brown's mediating pragmatic treatment, pp. 115 f.

The reality and the unity of these two ideas have never been expressed with more power and beauty than in Psalm 139:

> Thou hast searched me and known me, O Lord;
> Thou knowest when I sit down and when I stand up;
> Thou discernest my thought from afar.
> Thou dost measure out my course and my camp,
> And art intimately acquainted with all my ways.
> . . . .
> Thou dost enfold me behind and before,
> And dost put thy hand upon me;
> . . . .
>
> Whither shall I go from thy spirit?
> And whither shall I flee from thy presence?
> If I ascend to the heavens, thou art there!
> If I make Sheol my bed, thou art there also!
> If I take up the wings of the dawn,
> And dwell at the back of the sea,
> Even there thy hand will guide me,
> And thy right hand will hold me.
> If I say, "Darkness will surely cover me,"
> Then the night becomes light about me.[1]

The usual treatment of omnipresence and omniscience in systematic theology abundantly confirms this virtual identification of the two ideas. Clarke, for example, says:

> Omniscience is an inseparable companion-fact to omnipresence; or rather, is really a part of it. If God's entire power of action is everywhere available at all times, his entire power of knowing is everywhere available at all times, for knowing is one form of his acting.[2]

Likewise, Brunner affirms that the doctrine of divine omniscience is "intimately related with that of Omnipresense. . . we might even say that it reveals the ideal aspect of Omnipresense."[3]

---

[1] Psalm 139:1-11.

[2] Clarke, p. 80. This suggestion of the dynamic element in knowing is significant, as we shall see.

[3] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 261; cf. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 175; Wesley, Works, VI, 315.

In fact, it is difficult to imagine how the two could be separated. For in what could the "presence" of a spiritual being consist except in the "knowledge," the apprehension, the spiritual grasp, of that to which it is presented in intimate relevance? And conversely, how can anything be known except by the "presence" of what is known; not necessarily physical to be sure, but certainly mental, or perhaps more precisely, "imaginative"? In terms of human experience, if I say I "know" a friend who is now in Hongkong and quite absent from me physically, I mean by the assertion that he is present with me in memory and in imagination. It comes down to quite vivid and specific presentations of visual and auditory images, to the sound of remembered conversations, the recollection of characteristic frowns and smiles, walk and work. I cannot possibly know anyone or anything which is literally "absent" from me.

In the reverse case, a stranger whom I do not "know" but who is physically present to me is in fact partly known to me. I know something about how he looks and talks, for example. But I have not yet had a chance to explore him thoroughly, even in terms of perception, to be "presented" with the multitudinous characteristics of his physical being which would be necessary for adequate knowledge of it. Nor have his personality, his mind, his soul yet been presented to me in word and gesture and shared experience so that I know him in the deeper personal sense. Careful examination of any case of adequate knowing suggests that this always

involves some kind of intimate confrontation with, or presence of, the known object; whether it be in the highly indirect and sophisticated way in which an atomic nucleus is known, in the uniquely sympathetic way in which another person is known, or in the chiefly sensational way in which a good dinner is known. Spiritual presence is knowledge, and vice versa; a divine omniscience would coincide with a divine omnipresence.

The heart of both concepts might be expressed in a term that is at once more secular and more mystical than omniscience and omnipresence, the term intimacy. This was the great desideratum of William James in his search for a concept of God which would satisfy both the religious needs and intuitions of which his mystical and psychological studies had made him aware, and also the demands of critical thought. His conclusion that a finite deity is necessary to provide this intimacy may be questionable; but his conviction that it is indispensable to living religion is surely correct.[1]

Divine immanence.--Two other terms of the traditional theological vocabulary are relevant to the idea with which we are dealing. The immanence of God in His universe is virtually the same thing as His omnipresence, with perhaps a subtle emphasis upon the even more intimately pervasive character of God's relevance to all things. "Do not I fill the heavens and the earth?" asked the Lord of Jeremiah.[2] And

---

[1] Julius Seelye Bixler, Religion in the Philosophy of William James (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1926), pp. 61 f. 143.

[2] Jer. 23:24.

Paul appealed to the conviction of Jew and of Greek alike in reminding the Athenians that God "is not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and are.'"[1] The intensely personalistic outlook of the Bible checked the tendency to ascribe to God that undifferentiated immanence which was characteristic of Greek thought. Nevertheless, the sayings just cited fit together with a number of other passages to make clear that this idea was not uncongenial to the Biblical writers.[2]

This idea of divine immanence is very significant in general religious experience, from the animism of primitive man to the sophisticated and highly developed mysticisms of advanced religions. "God sleeps in the stone, he dreams in the animal, he wakes in man," is a familiar mystical saying which expresses this intuition.[3] An apocryphal logion of Christ illustrates the thinking of early Egyptian Christianity if not that of Jesus himself: "Cleave the wood, and I am there."[4] Patristic Greek theology is notably dominated by a conviction of pervasive divine immanence.[5]

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.--More characteristic of

---

[1] Acts 17:28 [2] Cf. Psalm 104:1-3. [3] Darr, 14.

[4] Quoted in Alfred North Whitehead, Religion in the Making ("Lowell Lectures," 1926; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926), p. 74. Whitehead distinguishes omniscience from immanence in this section, and certainly they can be contrasted in thought. Nevertheless, the root idea in each is the same.

[5] Alexander V. G. Allen, The Continuity of Christian Thought, A Study of Modern Theology in the Light of its History (4th ed.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887), chap. 1.

Biblical religion and of much Christian theology, however, has been the personalistic concept of the indwelling Spirit of God. In the Old Testament this plays a mighty role as specifying the power which moved the prophet whose typical utterance was, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me."[1] The indwelling word of the Lord--not an idea only, but a focus of God's own living power--was all too vivid an experience for Jeremiah:

> It is in my heart like a burning fire,
> Shut up in my bones;
> I am worn out with holding it in.[2]

But this Spirit of God was not confined to prophets only. It moved upon the face of the primeval deep.[3] It creates men and animals and gives them life.[4] In the New Testament the presence of the Holy Spirit is the great fact to which the existence of the church testifies, and of which believers are given an inward token. "No man has ever seen God. . . .By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit."[5] As Goodspeed says, the book of Acts almost floats on a sea of the Holy Spirit.[6]

This intimacy of the perceptive, sympathetic, and dynamic life of God with the world as a whole and with human spirits within it, symbolized in these traditional theological attributes of omniscience, omnipresence, immanence, and

---

[1] Isaiah 61:1. [2] Jer. 20:9. [3] Gen. 1:2.

[4] Job 33:4; Psalm 104:30. [5] I John 4:12 f.

[6] Edgar J. Goodspeed, An Introduction to the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 192.

the indwelling Spirit, is vividly expressed in the New Testament metaphor of the body of Christ, that organic unity in which all the saints dwell, bound up with one another and with the Lord:

> In him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be preëminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.[1]

This same profound intuition is echoed in the closing lines of a letter from a missionary friend in the Orient: "My love goes out to you. Or maybe it's God's love just passing through. Eloise and I used to forget--still do--whose experiences were whose. I think sometimes what I assume is mine is really God's."[2]

Divine Omniscience and Love

The point of the foregoing discussion is simply to suggest the enormous role which a fundamental congeries of ideas has played in both the secular and the religious apprehension of reality. All these terms with their various shades of meaning--pervasive cosmic order, universal relevance, the immanence of God, the Holy Spirit, divine omniscience, divine omnipresence--seem to constitute facets of a single idea. This category we must now define in order to test its adequacy. We started off on this path because of

---

[1] Col. 1:17-20.

[2] From Mary Mitchell, Hiroshima, Japan, Nov., 1952. "Eloise" is an intimate friend of the missionary.

the hint given by the prominence of divine Love in the theological tradition. But in what way do these ideas involve the peculiarly affective, sympathetic qualities which Love inevitably suggests?

Knowledge involves Sympathy.--To begin with, profound knowing always involves not only a sheerly cognitive or abstractly intellectual element, but also an affective, emotional factor for which the relatively neutral terms "appreciation" or "Sympathy" might be a suitable designation. Charles Hartshorne reports that a very distinguished physicist once surprised him by remarking, "The way to understand an electron is to sympathize with it."[1] Such a recognition that in dealing even with the most abstract or remote objects there is some sense of rapport which bears the character of Sympathy, of Love in its most general though perhaps most diluted sense, is not uncommon. In our knowledge of more concrete realities, where we work not through a veil of symbols but with greater directness, the same fact is even more evident. The attitude of a first-rate mechanic toward the engine he is seeking to understand, of a biologist toward the animals or cells he is investigating,[2] of a naturalist for a flower or a hawk he is observing--all these can be adequately expressed only in terms which add to sheer cognition some element of appreciation, of emotional rapport. Goethe is an

---

[1] Hartshorne, Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation, p. 13.

[2] Cf. the remarks of a biologist on his study of ticks! Time Magazine, LXI, (March 16, 1953), p. 74.

outstanding example of one who brought to the observation of nature an extraordinary intensity of this kind of intellectual sympathy, and who saw with almost clairvoyant power as a result.[1]

Linguistic usage makes it difficult to assess the full force of this idea. We all "know" two or three thousand persons, for example; and yet, if we ask ourselves seriously whether we really know our own child or our marriage partner we should have to confess that we can hardly make that claim. Knowing a person, in anything like the full sense of that phrase, involves a commitment of emotion and interest of such total character that we seldom achieve it, and never achieve it for more than a few persons. Even to know ourselves truly is an enormous task of self-concern--genuine love and sympathy for our selves, not just our sensations or superficial interests. Martin Buber has pointed out with great power and clarity some of the depths in this matter of true knowing, particularly in his books I and Thou, and Between Man and Man.[2] Ecstatic as his utterance may be at times, the enormous fruitfulness of his writings in philosophical and theological thought testifies to the essential soundness of his insight concerning the full dimensions of feeling, sympathy, and concern involved in a proper concept of the category of knowledge.

Striking confirmation of this tendency for knowing

---

[1] Buber, I and Thou, p. 66.

[2] Martin Buber, Between Man and Man, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1949).

and love, cognition or perception and sympathy, actually to coalesce or to exhibit themselves as diverse manifestations of a single subjective act is found in the Biblical idea of what it means to "know." To begin with, this verb is used of sexual intercourse--a usage which is still reflected in our archaic legal terminology, to have "sexual knowledge" of a person.[1] In more generalized fashion, "knowing indicates a thorough, mutual feeling," according to an outstanding authority on Hebrew thought.[2] The close ties between a people and its own territory is expressed in the assertion that they "know" it.[3] The intimate companionship between a man and his animals is said to be "knowledge," and hence comparable to the relation between father and son.[4] Religious intimacy between man and God finds no higher expression in the Old Testament than this: "They shall teach no more every one his neighbor, and every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord'; for all of them shall know me."[5]

Conversely, God's knowledge of man is not simply a neutral objective cognition, but interested, concerned, filled with dynamic feeling. "His knowledge is the expression of His sympathy, His care, His planning, and His love."[6] Hence knowing merges into the idea of election. "You only have I

---

[1] Gen. 4:1; 4:17; 24:16; Num. 31:17, and frequently.

[2] Johs. Pederson, Israel, Its Life and Culture (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), I-II, 309.

[3] Num. 14:31. Cf. Pederson, p. 459. [4] *Ibid.*, p. 481.

[5] Jer. 31:34. [6] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 263.

known of all the families of the earth."[1] "The Lord knows those who are his."[2]

From the side of philosophical thought this coalescence of knowledge and love has not gone unnoted. Hocking quotes with approval the suggestion of Royce, that "divine attention is the same thing as divine love."[3] That "love of this sort is the one thing in the world that is creative" is a further inference which finds much support in the theological tradition that "the knowledge of God is the cause of things."[4] Conversely Hazelton points out that Love "is a kind of social knowing, for it rests upon true awareness of the solidarity and mutuality in which the common life must be lived."[5]

---

[1] Amos 3:2.

[2] Cf. Brunner, Our Faith, p. 30, on election: "When a man is permitted to perceive that God sees him from eternity, when the eternally beholding eyes of God rest upon him. . . . a man then knows that God loves him from eternity and for eternity." Cf. H. H. Farmer, The World and God, A Study of Prayer, Providence and Miracle in Christian Experience ("Library of Constructive Theology;" New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, n.d.), p. 254.

[3] Hocking, p. 206.

[4] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.14.8. Cf. Charles Hartshorne, "Ideal Knowledge Defines Reality: What Was True in 'Idealism,'" The Journal of Philosophy, XLIII (Oct. 10, 1946), p. 580: "Experience on the whole supports the principle that to be is to be known. The enjoyment of friendship, the role of mutuality of experiences, the effect upon us of praise and blame, and of the belief that we shall be remembered after our death--these are some of the ways in which our sense of really existing draws tribute from our awareness of being known. . . .How much more literally and completely can reflection in God's ideally sympathetic, that is, completely clear, appreciations constitute our identity."

[5] Cf. Hazelton, p. 110; Hocking, pp. 286 f.

But now we must face an obvious objection to this asserted correlation between knowing and an ethical, sympathetic concern. Granted that real knowledge involves some degree of that dynamic interest in its object which we have called Sympathy, need this interest be positive? May it not equally well be the morally detached though epistemologically intense interest of the scientist engaged in vivisection; or even that of the sadist observing with keen delight and exquisite care the torments of his victim?[1]

Taking the sadist first, anything significant which is said about him must begin with the obvious fact that he is insane. He illustrates, therefore, with great precision and force the very fact in question, that knowing which is divorced from moral Sympathy is essentially unsound, unhealthy, abnormal. That such derangement of the mind is possible or even common does not make it a proper clue to the true and normative character of knowledge. The fact that a divorce between perception and love, when carried to its logical end, issues in a most vivid and reprehensible form of psychosis is a strong indication that in their proper functioning these enterprises of the mind are inseparable. There is perversion, incipient insanity, in every instance of perceptive

---

[1] The theological relevance of these questions is not inconsiderable; as witness such documents as Edwards' sermons, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and the less known but even more vivid "The Future Punishment of the Wicked Unavoidable and Intolerable"; Faust and Johnson, pp. 144 ff., 155 ff. This is not to say that Edwards was a sadist; but there can be little doubt that in these sermons he comes close to making God a Sadist!

attention to the feelings of another without a corresponding ethical concern.

In the more complex case of the vivisectionist the actual motives involved must be carefully analyzed. First, it is significant that the carefree brutalities of early modern medicine were at least in part the result of the widely accepted theory of Descartes that animals are simply animate mechanisms with no real feelings of the kind human beings experience.[1] With the discarding of that view the canons of humane treatment of experimental animals have become generally accepted. In this respect the history of animal experimentation actually reinforces the thesis in question.

Second, it must be noted that the attitude of the scientist to his animals is almost completely objective. He sees them as so many containers for the culture of a given virus or as the source of particular chemical substances. He "knows" them, that is, in a very important but also sharply limited way; with almost complete lack of rapport with them as fellow living beings. The attitude of the naturalist is significantly different at this point.

Third, we must recognize that genuine knowing, in that full sense which implies sympathetic rapport, involves perceptions of relative disvalue as well as value. A rat, for example, even at best represents only an extremely low order of worth and possibility. Particularly when it is

---

[1] B. A. G. Fuller, A History of Philosophy (1 vol. ed.; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), II, 78.

contemplated in a context of medical research for the benefit of human beings even a perfect Sympathy for it would still allow a relatively cold-blooded use of it in experiments.

This, of course, raises the critical question as to why men should assume themselves to be any more valuable in the sight of God than rats are to men. Why might they not be simply the material for some interesting divine experiments with evolution or bacteria? To this at least two things may be said, briefly: (a) We are working here within the context of the Christian faith; and it may be flatly said that such a depreciation of man has no real support in that tradition. Even those who, like Calvin, Luther or Wesley, spoke in the strongest terms of "depravity" yet admitted the extraordinary natural excellence of man. (b) It might at least be suggested that any being is worth what it believes itself to be worth. Our own self-estimate, that is, represents our (largely unconscious) recognition of God's perfect knowledge of us. There is no evidence that the rat discerns itself to be worth more than the experimenter thinks. In contrast, man rates himself neither a god (when sane) nor an animal (when at his best), but as a son of God--a finite being of moral capacity and creative power. (This estimate appears with complete clarity only through the Christian revelation, to be sure. But this is a good credential.) On this basis, God's perfect knowledge of man would involve appreciation and Sympathy.

In view of these characteristics of "knowing," as

profoundly and truly understood, it now seems possible to sum up the meaning of the omniscience and omnipresence of God in the assertion that a fundamental character of His nature is a quality of perfectly universal and perfectly discerning Sympathy. To deny this would seem, on any Christian understanding of God, to be impossible, for that would be to deny that He genuinely knows all of His world, through and through, with a discernment more clear and intense than that with which we know ourselves. Against any such denial Luther's ringing words stand guard:

> The pious mind, therefore, is not shocked at hearing that God was in death and in hell: each of which is more horrible, and more loathsome, than either a hole or a sink. Nay, since the scripture testifies that God is every where, and fills all things, such a mind, not only says that he is in those places, but will, of necessity, learn and know that he is there. Unless we are to suppose, that if I should at any time be taken and cast into a prison, or a sink, (which has happened to many saints,) I could not there call upon God, or believe that he was present with me, until I should come into some ornamented church.[1]

Sympathy and the Other Categories

Clearly, the significance of God's omniscience and omnipresence is very great when these ideas are interpreted as meaning such universal Sympathy. In religious terms, they affirm that intimacy of the divine with the human toward which Christian faith strives as its chief goal. Is it possible to go farther and to affirm that this category of perfect Sympathy is an adequate basis upon which to construct

---

[1] Luther, Bondage of the Will, p. 38; cf. Jonah 2.

a complete doctrine of God? One test for that adequacy is to see how well it serves those permanent interests represented by the other major categories we have examined. Any adequate view of God must somehow make a place for the fundamental metaphysical factors of Power, of Order, and of Being. A God without a character of Being which is somehow, even if only by analogy, intelligible to us is only the "oblong blur" of the familiar gibe; a God without Power is no God at all for the worship and devotion of mankind but at best a bloodless abstraction for sophisticates; a God who does not account for the magnificent character of Order which constitutes our world is irrelevant. But the problem is not one of skilful rhetoric, simply to declare *that* God is all these; but rather one of patient analysis, showing *how* these elements belong integrally, by necessity, to a God primarily defined as Sympathy.

Sympathy as Being

We arrived at the category of Sympathy partly through an analysis of the idea of omniscience, finding that the meaning of knowing is not fully expressible in terms of sheerly abstract intellection. Rather, it is best understood as one aspect of a perceptive experience which also exhibits the more dynamic, vivid pole which we call Sympathy. Our concern now is to generalize this conclusion and try to see if the element in experience we call Sympathy may not be a primary example, if not the sole one, of that fundamental

character of reality which philosophy has long sought in terms of "substance" or Being.

The characteristic essence of what we call Sympathy is surely feeling, the experience of affective, socially oriented awareness. That God's awareness, His feeling, must be at least partly oriented to His world would seem to follow without question from the reality of the latter and from His interest in it--two postulates of Biblical and Christian religion which can be assumed here in spite of the ambiguity which a misguided metaphysics has introduced into theology. Divine solipsism is a fantasy we need not explore. What evidence is there that feeling of this social quality might constitute the "substance" of God?

The categorial status of feeling.--Certainly feeling is for naive experience the most fundamental of all categories. To exist, so far as we can tell from direct inspection of our primary intuitions, is to feel, i.e., to have some degree of generalized awareness with affective tone.[1] It is true that we observe many things which seem to possess no "feeling." But this is only a supposition, a guess. We know of no existence, no reality, which is not constituted

---

[1] In the thought of Schleiermacher, for whom "feeling" was a primary category, the term applied not simply to affective states but to the fundamental nature of the self of which the tone of emotional states is one expression, but of which actions and moral decisions are also expressions. "Feeling," then, is the unity of the person and of his sensory and spiritual world. It is by this general conception of the term that our analysis here is oriented. Cf. Brandt, pp. 268 ff.

upon a fundamental structure of such feeling. Sorley suggests, "The feeling of pleasure or displeasure is, I believe, the experience which brings home to a man most convincingly this identity of the self as a continuous life."[1] And Whitehead points out that our ordinary ideas of what feeling is are often too superficial. He calls attention to the "massive self-enjoyment derived from internal bodily functioning. . . .diversified by a trickle of conscious memory and conscious anticipation."[2]

In working out his singularly suggestive categorial system Charles Peirce found three fundamental elements which he believed all reality to exhibit. He called them, formally, firstness, secondness, and thirdness. By firstness he meant such monadic characters as quality, originality, spontaneity, feeling, immediate consciousness, the absolute present. By secondness he indicated dyadic characters of which relation, compulsion, effort, negation, reality, result are examples. Thirdness is the category of triadicity, exemplified by sympathy, generality, order, interpretation, meaning, and continuity.[3] All the categories enter into every genuine experience and we can have none of them in isolation, yet it is clear that firstness is logically prior to the others,

---

[1] Sorley, p. 219.

[2] Alfred North Whitehead, "Immortality," in Schilpp, Philosophy of Whitehead, pp. 694 f.

[3] Eugene Freeman, The Categories of Charles Peirce (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1934), pp. 53 f.

the categorial correlate of the general notion of Being. And the connection between firstness, generalized Being, and the basic character of feeling with which we are dealing, is equally clear. It is qualities, and qualitatively determined feelings, which are the primordial elements in reality. What these qualities could be, in turn, except feelings Peirce cannot imagine. He guesses that it is, for example, "a psychic feeling of red without us which arouses a sympathetic feeling of red in our senses."[1] Hence the fundamental constituents of all existence turn out to be feelings; which enter into meaningful relationship only through Sympathy.

One great advantage of this specification of the meaning of Being is that it avoids the pernicious abstractiveness which has been the curse of other attempts to get at primordial reality by stripping off those elements which are always involved in actual experience. Whether it is the "being-itself" of Tillich, the "substance" of Aristotle, or the pure actuality of scholasticism, such definitions of Being represent an attempt to build our understanding of the world and of God upon what Whitehead very aptly called "vacuous actuality."[2] Peirce's approach, like that of Whitehead, identifies the fundamental character of reality with precisely that which we know best to be real. The possible alternatives to feeling as the concrete specification of Being

---

[1] Buchler, p. 84.

[2] Whitehead, Process and Reality, p. viii.

are, so far as I know, the categories of "matter" and of some kind of "substance" which has the character neither of experience nor of matter but is something more primordial than either.[1] The latter seems singularly superfluous; for why should it be any harder to get along with a dualism of "mind" and "matter," or to derive matter from mind or mind from matter, than to derive these two--the only kinds of reality we seem to know--from something else different from both and totally unknown to us? As to the primacy of "matter" for the character of Being, the most important tendencies in recent thought point strongly to its inadequacy. Hartshorne has summed up something of the case against it thus:

> If "matter" means something *alternative to experience* (to subjectivity in the broadest sense), then precisely this alternative status, this *definitely asserted possibility* of no-experience, no-feeling, no-sociality, this alleged neutrality or possible vacuousness of matter, by which it was formerly contrasted to mind, is the very set of aspects, or pseudo-notions, that advances in scientific subtlety and adequacy have been eliminating.[2]

As Whitehead would allege, "no unmistakable samples of concrete actuality other than experiences are directly given or positively imaginable as actualities (with quality as well as relational structure, causal connectedness, intrinsic be-

---

[1] The complicated discussion of seventeen possible types of theory as to the metaphysical role of mind carried out by C. D. Broad in chap. xiv of his *The Mind and Its Place in Nature* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949) seems to me to boil down to some form or other of one of these.

[2] Charles Hartshorne, "Whitehead's Metaphysics," in Victor Lowe, Charles Hartshorne, A. H. Johnson, *Whitehead and the Modern World, Science, Metaphysics, and Civilization, Three Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1950), p. 39.

coming, etc.)"[1]

All this is, of course, part of an argument for the generally panpsychistic metaphysics with which a number of creative thinkers have come to identify themselves more or less explicitly: Peirce, Whitehead, James, Bergson, Paulsen, Montague, Garnett, Fechner, Hartshorne, and Boodin among others.[2] Moreover, the idealistic tradition in philosophy is akin to this general point of view, the difference between the two consisting largely in a divergence of emphasis. Idealism pays more attention to consciousness conceived after the manner of thought, pure intellection (whatever that is) and cognition; panpsychism to consciousness as fundamentally constituted by feeling, affective quality.[3] Furthermore, it is difficult to see how even Dewey could be excluded from this list in view of his distinct metaphysical monism of 'ex-

---

[1] Hartshorne, Whitehead and the Modern World, p. 39.

[2] Charles Hartshorne lists many of these in his article, "Theological Values in Current Metaphysics," Journal of Religion, XXVI (July, 1946), 158. In his "On Some Criticisms of Whitehead's Philosophy," Philosophical Review, XLIV (July, 1935), 330, he suggests the three types of evidence upon whose interplay the case for panpsychism rests: (a) "If feeling is the most general character of the immediately given, then we can form no more general category by which to describe existence in general"; (b) Feeling of feeling is immediately given in our experience of our bodies; (c) "Structurally and behavioristically. . .physical objects in general exhibit analogies to that object which is the human body." Cf. Montague, pp. 75 f.

[3] Hermann Lotze, Microcosmus, An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World, trans. Elizabeth Hamilton and E. E. Constance Jones (4th ed.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894), II, 723, insists upon the priority of the living and concrete mind as against either dead atoms, forces or laws, or "dead" ideas.

perience," which seems to be just what the panpsychists are talking about.[1]

Even theologians who are a bit shy of panpsychist metaphysics because its implications are felt to be pantheistic have not been entirely untouched by this kind of thought. Eugene Lyman, one of the most careful and influential of American philosophers of religion has developed a concept of nature in accord with it.[2] The tough-minded empiricist F. R. Tennant finds such a "pluralistic spiritualism" quite preferable to common-sense dualism.[3] John Bennett calls the general Whiteheadian form of panpsychism "as fruitful an hypothesis as is available to religious philosophy."[4] Charles Hartshorne has given panpsychism what is perhaps its most persuasive adaptation to theology in a number of his writings.[5]

Our concern at this point, however, is not primarily

---

[1] Cf. Dewey, Experience and Nature, chap. i, and passim.

[2] Eugene Lyman, The Meaning and Truth of Religion, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 279 ff. Cf. Walter Marshall Horton, "Eugene W. Lyman: Liberal Christian Thinker," in David E. Roberts and Henry Pitney Van Dusen (eds.), Liberal Theology, An Appraisal (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), pp. 20 f.

[3] Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 218 f.

[4] John C. Bennett, "Three Levels of Persuasiveness," Christendom, VII (Winter, 1942), 104.

[5] Hartshorne, Journal of Religion, XXVI, 157 ff.; "A New Philosophic Conception of the Universe," Hibbert Journal, XLIV (Oct., 1945-July, 1946), 14 ff. Beyond Humanism, Essays in the New Philosophy of Nature (Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1937), Part II.; Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation, pp. 263 ff.

with the validity of a panpsychist or even an idealist metaphysics. It will suffice for our purposes if the validity of the category of Sympathy, or socially oriented feeling, is established as one basic form of Being, of "substance" or reality, even if not the sole one. That this is the case, that the kind of experience represented in Sympathy is at least as adequate a specimen of Being as any other claimant to reality, seems to be perfectly clear.

Sympathy as Order

In describing God in terms of reason, law, or as providential governor Christian thought has made much of the category of Order as an element in the divine nature. Does the concept of divine Sympathy provide a basis for a doctrine of God in which this element is fully recognized?

First we need to be clear as to the degree and kind of Order with which we are really concerned. It is very easy to assume that the ordering of God must be absolute and rigid, compelling with minute precision the exact form of all the details of cosmic history. The successes of exact science and precise technology give impetus to this way of thinking which is characteristic of rationalism and is in harmony with the pious feelings which love to exalt God's absolute control and His providential care. Thus in much historic theology and philosophy we have been provided with a lavish superfluity of cosmic orderliness.

As a matter of fact, the enormous variety displayed in the world-order makes dubious the notion of a single ab-

solute and perfectly structured world Governor. Newton pointed out that "blind metaphysical necessity, which is certainly the same always and everywhere, could produce no variety of things."[1] In the same way, the recently discovered principle that complete orderliness cannot even in theory be extended into the finest recesses of submicroscopic phenomena points to a limitation of the importance of this category. All things do act by law, as Hooker saw, yet the law is not woven so fine that spontaneity does not slip through its meshes within the atom, and the mind, and possibly elsewhere.[2]

Yet another factor to be considered in this connection is the generality of the principle of evolution. The earlier formulation of this idea made it consist in the unvarying application of rigid laws which issued in development which was precisely determined. Now Whitehead and others have been emphasizing the much more fundamental principle that evolution describes not only the results of the action of laws, but the career of those laws themselves. The world is constituted by order, but that very constitution slowly changes in the progress through cosmic epochs.[3]

---

[1] Newton, p. 371. Cf. Lewis, Mind and the World-Order, pp. 345 ff., for an illuminating discussion of the degree and kinds of order required.

[2] Cf. the discussion of the principle of indeterminacy by Eddington, pp. 220 ff.

[3] Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World ("Lowell Lectures"; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), pp. 155 ff. Cf. Lewis, Mind and the World-Order, chap. viii, on the developing and pragmatic character of "a priori" principles.

Finally, the fact of mental freedom, human and perhaps even animal in some degree, cannot be ignored in any valid assessment of the scope and meaning of the category of Order. At this point most modern theology has definitely rejected one of the axioms of Reformation thinkers. Even they could not fully vindicate the "bondage of the will" for *all* human action. Now Wesley's defense of human freedom has been generally accepted even by the neo-Reformers. From Brunner we hear that "God *limits Himself*" by creating beings with a relative independence;[1] His grace is not coercive;[2] man "has a decisively free, independent being, not only toward other creatures but even toward God Himself."[3] Indeed, he recognizes what Hartshorne, from a sharply differing theological point of view, convincingly maintains: that the very fact of being *real* involves some independence, some degree of freedom for spontaneous action.[4] It is impossible to conceive a being absolutely transparent to the power or will of God which would not by virtue of that fact be actually identified with God's own being. If there were *no* difference between the divine fiat and the action of the creature, i.e.,

---

[1] Brunner, *Doctrine of God*, p. 251.

[2] Brunner, *Our Faith*, pp. 24, 27.

[3] Brunner, *Divine-Human Encounter*, p. 53.

[4] Brunner, *Doctrine of God*, p. 251; Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity, A Social Conception of God* ("Terry Lectures"; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 138 ff.; and "Contingency and the New Era in Metaphysics," *Journal of Philosophy*, XXIX (Aug. 4, 1932), 421 ff.

if there were no resistence to mark that difference, then the creature and the divine will would be indistinguishable.

All these considerations combine to give us a corrected perspective upon the meaning and place of the element of Order. They show that God will best be thought of not in terms of an absolute Reason out of which the world in its concreteness is spun with the inexorable precision of a deduction; nor as an absolute Ruler who determines the fall of every sparrow and every hair.[1]

Cosmic Order is more a matter of mutual adaptation, the bringing about of relationships, the implementing of mutual relevance among all events, than a matter of rigid dictation.[2] Essentially, Order is that principle by which events exhibit a degree of coherence, of consistency. It represents the account taken by events, one of another, as they succeed each other through time, or encounter each other in a given present. There is in all order at least some suggestion of that mutual adaptiveness which we find most familiarly exemplified in human social relations, along with aspects of greater precision, compulsion, and necessity. Or to use another metaphor, Order seems in its most fundamental

---

[1] Although Matthew says no sparrow falls without the Father's will, Luke gives what is at least as likely to be the original form: "Not one of them is forgotten before God." And the hairs are "numbered," not ruled. This may be hair-splitting, but nevertheless it is interesting to see that omniscience, sympathy, are the categories here, not sovereignty. Matt. 10:29 f.; Luke 12:6 f. See the next section on Sympathy as Power.

[2] Cf. Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 276.

and general character to be more aesthetic than mechanical. This was one of Jonathan Edwards' great insights, although under the undue influence of a nascent Newtonianism he tended to confuse the two. It may well be fitness or cosmic beauty which is the end of that pervasive Ordering which religion believes to be God's work in His world.[1]

Bearing in mind these considerations concerning the kind and degree of Order with which a realistic theology is concerned, we may now try to connect this factor with the cosmic Sympathy of God. Although Lotze despaired of being able to demonstrate it, he was convinced that it is the nature and work of universal Love "to establish an universal order and regularity, within which various individuals, comparable in kind, could be brought into a connection of reciprocal action."[2] He was discouraged by the impersonality and the apparently mechanical aspect of the world as envisaged by science which he felt incompatible with the nature of Love. But the occurrence of Order depends upon two factors: it involves relatedness, and it involves impartiality. The former aspect is necessary for that connectedness or relevance of the parts of an ordered system which constitute its existence. This is what Lotze saw in suggesting that Love is the basis of Order. When we speak of being related to a world-Order, says Hartshorne,

---

[1] Edwards, Works, I, cclxx ff.; cf. Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, chaps. xvii, xviii.

[2] Lotze, II, 724.

> we do not know either what an inclusive wholeness not constituted by sympathy could be or how we could be related to it. . . .A whole containing a number of feelings of diverse subjects is, in direct experience (the source of all meanings), illustrated only by certain phenomena of sympathy.[1]

Second, Order demands not only relatedness but regularity, "objectivity" of mood so to speak, the fitting together of elements of an ordered whole in terms not of whim or partial preference but in terms of impartiality. But this is exactly what is involved in the postulate of God's divine Sympathy; i.e., its universality, its absolute impartiality, so far as the special interests of finite beings are concerned. It is as inclusive, as undiscriminating, as uniform as the space-time continuum which is one of its most appropriate symbols.[2] It would appear, therefore, that this very character of absolutely universal relevance, which of course takes the form of precisely individual concern for each individual event, would in itself constitute a basis for a character of Order in divine Sympathy. An interest in all, which knows and appropriately values all, would seem to be incapable of that chaotic or discriminatory or partial interest which would be the only conceivable ground for disorder. That idea of Zwingli and Calvin which seemed so curious in its context might appropriately be applied here. They argued that God could not be unjust because He would

---

[1] Hartshorne, Journal of Philosophy, XLIII, 581.

[2] Cf. Ferré, pp. 75 ff.; Hartshorne, "A Critique of Peirce's Idea of God," Philosophical Review, L (Sept., 1941), 522.

have no conceivable motive for injustice. Because God has an interest--a total and supreme interest--in His cosmos as a whole, He must necessarily desire for it that degree of Order which is most appropriate. Because He has a perfectly particular interest in every individual He must necessarily will that it find its most appropriate place in the entire manifold of interrelations which makes up His cosmos. His constant interest in the best possible adjustment of conflicts or incompatibilities within the world is an obvious corollary of His perfect Sympathy.

The chief question remaining would seem to be whether He has the Power to implement His interest in Order. With this we turn to the third major category which it is our task to correlate with the idea of Sympathy.

Sympathy as Power

At first sight the categories of Sympathy and of Power look antithetical. The former seems almost entirely passive; the latter appears virtually to be defined by activity.[1] Yet we arrived at the concept we call Sympathy chiefly by reference to the almost unanimous testimony of piety, theology, and philosophy to God's omniscience and omnipresence. And certainly such present-ness, relatedness, sensitivity and participation is not only passive--as providing

---

[1] Cf. Mackintosh, Christian Apprehension of God, pp. 146 f.: "Love when analyzed does not yield power as one of its intrinsic elements, nor does power yield love. After all it is only as believers that we are certain of their unity in God; our insight into their oneness in Him is the insight not of speculation but of faith."

the medium in which the activities of lesser beings take place--but it is also and even predominantly positive and active in quality. It is the dynamic pole of experience, of which "cognition" is a more passive correlate. It is that character by which God enters into every bit of existence. Not only do finite beings register their influence upon God's Sympathy, but His concern, His feeling register themselves with infinitely greater force upon all these beings to which He is present. Therefore, to make such Sympathy a primary category for the divine nature need not involve a denaturing of God's Power to such an extent that He no longer figures as a positive factor in reality. Yet the question still remains: with what validity may we argue that Sympathy so adequately exemplifies the character of Power as to be fit to describe the very nature of "God the Father Almighty"?

In this connection it is helpful to note the specific character of Power in the kind of society generally recognized today by Christians as normative, i.e., a democracy. As Heimann has pointed out, our ethical goal for human society is a synthesis of freedom and order.[1] Why should not this same synthesis represent the fundamental character of the cosmic society? In a human democracy it is primarily Power in the form of moral influence, of persuasion, which directs its members. And this very term, "persuasion," has been adopted by Whitehead and others to signify the nature

---

[1] Hartshorne, Divine Relativity, p. xv.

of overarching divine Power. They feel that in this concept there is sufficient generality to express the inmost quality of the most significant kind of power--perhaps of all power whatever.[1]

This belief is reinforced by the fact that to be *real* in any meaningful sense, a thing must have some independence and some measure of power. The divine Power must then in the nature of the case be *social*, exercised in *interaction* with other centers of power. And that too would seem to suggest a character of persuasiveness rather than dictation. Yet what can the "persuasion" of non-conscious entities be (if the panpsychist or idealist interpretation of reality is rejected); and furthermore, why can not the exercise of divine Power, granted that it operates against resistance, still be sheerly compulsive, so to speak, rather than persuasive or sympathetic? This leads us directly to the fundamental question of what is involved in action by one being upon another, i.e., to the problem of "causation."

Causation.--As we have seen, Aquinas taught that causation consists in the imparting to the effect of some

---

[1] Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, pp. 205 ff., 381. This identification of power with persuasion was, of course, a central idea for Plato (Timaeus, 48A, in Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*, p. 160), and for Aristotle, as he envisaged the way in which the Unmoved Mover functioned as a final cause (Metaphysics, XII, 7, in *Works of Aristotle*, pp. 879 ff.). Harris Franklin Rall speaks of the "democracy of God," in *The Meaning of God* ("Quillian Lectures"; Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1924), chap. iii.

character which was in the cause.[1] But just what this can mean is difficult to say. Protestant theologians have not often wrestled with this topic but have simply accepted the more or less common-sense understanding of causation as analogous to the effect of a man's will upon his body or upon an instrument in his hand, with the will of God taking the place in the cosmos occupied by the human will in respect to the body. But then Hume came along and disposed of the assumption that causation was self-evidently intelligible.[2] Here the thing was left, in spite of Kant's efforts, a total mystery, until fairly recent times.

Now Whitehead and others have offered what seems a possible line of explanation for this fact of the communication of influence. Causal coherence is a psychic and aesthetic affair in which the sensitivity of one event to another, a "feeling" of it or Sympathy with it, constitutes the link between them. To interpret causal relation thus is to make it concrete in terms of memory and anticipation, the sense of conformation to past emotions and purposes and to the feelings flowing to us from the body and through the body from other beings. Order in an individual life is a drive toward harmony in the relations of the past, present, and future; in society, of the self with other selves. In the world as a whole there must be such a unitary aesthetic drive, "a

---

[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I. 19.2 and 4.

[2] David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1928), I, 73-173.

cosmic love which seeks beauty everywhere it can be attained, and guides the general direction of cosmic change so that the right balance of novelty and repetition shall in general be secured."[1] "Causation" names the interpenetrating lines of Sympathetic connection within this framework of divine Love.

Other aspects of Sympathy as Power.--This account of causation helps us to understand what is meant by God's persuasion of the world. A statement by Hartshorne summarizes this meaning of Sympathy as Power:

> God orders the universe. . .by taking into his own life all the currents of feeling in existence. He is the most irresistible of influences precisely because he is himself the most open to influence. In the depths of their hearts all creatures (even those able to "rebel" against him), defer to God because they sense him as the one who alone is adequately moved by what moves them. He alone not only knows but feels (the only adequate knowledge where feeling is concerned) how they feel, and he finds his own joy in sharing their lives. . . .Yet the extent to which they can be permitted to work out their own plan depends on the extent to which they can echo or imitate on their own level the divine sensitiveness to the needs and precious freedom of all. . . . [God's power] flows from the intrinsic appeal of his infinitely sensitive and tolerant relativity, by which all things are kept moving in orderly togetherness.[2]

In the ordering of human relationships there is a good deal of evidence to confirm this view of God's Sympathy as Power. For example, consider what it is in a well-ordered family, which keeps children in essential harmony with one

---

[1] Hartshorne, Philosophy of Whitehead, pp. 538 f. Cf. the way in which Pratt is forced back to an ultimate agnosticism about causation, chiefly because his metaphysical dualism of matter and spirit forbids his use of this explanation; Personal Realism, p. 136.

[2] Hartshorne, Divine Relativity, p. xv.

another. It is partly affection, no doubt, and certain parental coercions; yet any parent knows how limited and sporadic is the effectiveness of either of these. Is not a much more fundamental factor the children's perception, sometimes only unconscious or dimly felt, of the love of the parents for them all, both as individuals and as related one to the other? Or consider the fundamental ethical imperative of Christianity: the command to treat each person as one "for whom Christ died."[1] Moral order is thus achieved by virtue of a perfect concern of God for all men, by means of which men recognize their relevance to one another.

Another aspect of this same idea that divine Power is implied by divine Sympathy is suggested by a term we encountered in arriving at a definition of the latter, the term Holy Spirit. It has always been the Christian faith that God's presence in His creation is at least in part a literal indwelling. We ought to act by virtue of the fact that Christ dwells within us.[2] Insofar as divine Sympathy may be understood in these literal terms of God within man, constituting the very motive of his action, the dynamic of his behavior, it is evident that the kind of interrelation, mutual relevance, cooperation, and harmony which is the essence of Order in the human sphere at least, is directly implied. And there is no reason, so far as the tradition goes, to limit this literal indwelling of God, His real immanent action, to

---

[1] I Cor. 8:11. [2] Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; John 15:1-9.

mankind. The Biblical passages noted earlier are sufficient confirmation of this.

Such considerations help to indicate the validity of integrating divine Power with God's Sympathy. But what if the panpsychist view of reality is rejected? To this we may reply that the view just stated still gives the best solution to the problem of causation in the animate realm; and it is no worse off than any other in the inorganic. As Hooker saw, the order which an inanimate "nature" observes is a sheer mystery. In this respect the position just stated is no less adequate than any other conceivable interpretation of divine Power; for none of them "accounts" for the facts. On the other hand, if some kind of spiritualistic metaphysics be true, and there is no completely inanimate "nature," then this view offers a persuasive and adequate account of the concreteness of divine causality for the world in general.

Another possible objection is that this interpretation makes God too passive, too humble, too much at the mercy of the creation. Something more in the way of divine autocracy is more satisfying to many, not only because it gives them a more definite confidence that all the dangerous contingencies of experience are being manipulated in their favor but because they love to worship a mighty God. This is legitimate enough; yet we ought constantly to remember what Jesus taught about the kind of Power which ultimately prevails, and what Paul saw concerning "weak things."[1] It is

---

[1] Matt. 5:3, 5; I Cor. 1:18-2:5. One of the most

not denied, of course, that there are many elements in Jesus' teaching which point to the absoluteness of divine Power. Nor does the primacy of Sympathy destroy its real sovereignty. God's Power is precisely as eminent as His knowledge and His concern. But the uniqueness of the Christian message lies in the cross at its center, the ultimate symbol of a Power which works through humility, an influence whose core is not compulsion but persuasion, a sovereignty of which the essence is love. A writer orthodox enough to become Archbishop of Canterbury puts the matter thus:

> Love, if understood, always prevails at last; and it does so by making itself known; and it makes itself known by sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Love of God is the means by which sin is conquered; it is God's sacrifice of Himself, and therefore may reach and conquer all at last. . . .The Principle of Reason which governs the world is the eternal victory of Love over selfishness at the cost of sacrifice.[1]

One of the classics of Protestant theological writing in this century is John Oman's Grace and Personality. The core of that book is the affirmation that God's way with man is "a gracious personal relation."[2] In showing the inadequacy of all mechanical, impersonal notions of an irresistible divine grace, Oman comes very close to outlining the op-

---

striking testimonies in the whole Bible to this idea is found in the middle of a vivid celebration of sheer divine Power, Rev. 3:20.

[1] Temple, Foundations, pp. 221 f. Cf. the treatment of love as power by Hazelton, pp. 93 ff.

[2] John Oman, Grace and Personality (4th ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1931), general topic for Part I; cf. p. xi. Cf. Henry David Gray, The Christian Doctrine of Grace (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1949), chaps. viii, ix, xi-xiv.

eration of God in terms of what we have described as perfect and universal Sympathy.[1] If God's will for man is that he learn to live in love for all his fellow creatures and His supreme Power is exhibited in His ability to create that Love, then the synthesis of Power with the kind of Sympathy about which we have been thinking is perfectly illustrated in the Biblical text: "We love, because he first loved us."[2]

Sympathy as Metaphysical Excellence

In spite of these clear implications of the gospel, most Christian theologians have failed to connect them with the doctrine of God. They were intent to attribute to God every excellence and deny in Him every weakness or defect. But they often failed to discern what is really excellence and what is defect. They saw, as Hartshorne points out, that

> sympathy in man is partly weakness; it may cloud his reason, or paralyze his will. Then, too, sympathy makes the evils of others in some measure also our own, and so it easily comes to seem to us that sympathy is a handicap, not an asset. Instead of thinking, "it is bad that the other should suffer," I tend to think, "the bad thing is that my sympathy should cause his suffering to become mine." So we are apt to conclude that God must preserve himself from all such contamination with suffering. In this way, we attribute to him our own subtle selfishness, as well as our feebleness of reason and self-control.[3]

Thus traditional theology has been dominated by the idea that God's metaphysical excellence is bound up with His ab-

---

[1] Cf. Oman, Part II, chap. viii; Part III, chap. i.

[2] I John 4:19.

[3] Hartshorne, Journal of Liberal Religion, VIII (Summer, 1946), p. 38.

solute independence, sheer Power or pure "actuality." His might and His status are thought to be exalted by affirming that He affects us totally but we do not in the least affect Him. He must be "impassible" or "unconditioned."[1] Such notions die hard. And of course there *is* an independence which is admirable, the independence of ethical purpose which is unaffected by time or circumstance. This God fully exemplifies, because the character of His moral relationship with all His creatures is perfect and persists in utter independence of what they may do or be. But in its specific, concrete quality His experience is highly dependent on or relative to, the fortunes of His creatures, to their joy or sorrow, and especially to their moral defeat or victory.

On this basis Hartshorne states the principle that "sympathetic dependence is a sign of excellence and waxes with every ascent in the scale of being."[2] As verification he proposes the following mental experiment:

Suppose that someone reads aloud a noble piece of

---

[1] It is interesting to study the use of this term by Tillich, who popularized it in America. Those who write about his thought in *The Theology of Paul Tillich* assume that this is his regular term for God. Yet under the criticisms of Hartshorne he denies that he uses it now, saying that it appears only in some early writings. He does cling to the term "unconditional," however; and that seems to mean exactly the same thing, as e.g., *Systematic Theology*, I, 248: "A conditioned God is no God," in a context of the use of "unconditional." This uneasiness about a term which is obviously central for him is very revealing. Cf. *Theology of Tillich*, pp. 29, 37, 65, 136, 167 f., 194, 331, 340; Paul Tillich, *The Interpretation of History*, trans. N. A. Rasetzki and Elsa L. Talmey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), pp. 222, 267 ff.

[2] Hartshorne, *Divine Relativity*, pp. 48 f.

poetry in the presence of (a) a glass of water, (b) an ant, (c) a dog, (d) a human being unacquainted with the language of the poem, (e) a philistine who understands the language but cares nothing for poetry, and (f) a person both familiar with the language and sensitive to poetry. Each member of the series, he argues, is evidently superior to its predecessors. Yet each is also more dependent upon or relative to the poem as such, its meaning as well as its mere sounds. The water will exhibit to perfection the prized attribute of "impassibility" so far as the meaning of the poem is concerned, and be almost equally insensitive to the physical sounds. The ant will at least be somewhat affected by the vocal noises, since it has hearing; while the dog will be influenced by the sound and may even be vaguely stirred by the emotional tones in the voice. The man not knowing the language will receive these influences in more rich and varied fashion, and may enjoy some sense of the verbal music of the poem. The listener who comprehends the words but is insensitive to poetry will get an additional number of images and ideas. The adequate listener will be led through a deep and immeasurably rich adventure of emotion, thought, memory, and imagination.

Conclusions

With this indication that metaphysical excellence is at least in some degree bound up with Sympathy, i.e., adequately sensitive knowing, we reach a turning point in this

part of our analysis. Underlying the conclusion that significant divine perfection is correlated with perfect Sympathy is evidence that in this category those legitimate interests are provided for which have traditionally led to the formulation of a doctrine of God in terms of Power, Order or Being. And it has also been shown that this idea is no strange, new doctrine but that it is implicit in the best cosmology of modern science as well as in the profoundest religion of all times, as faith has spoken of the divine omniscience and omnipresence. The final, and critical, question is this: How well does Sympathy formulate God's *moral* perfection? Or in more direct language, How is Sympathy related to Love?

CHAPTER X

SYMPATHY AS MORAL EXCELLENCE

Page

The Specification of Moral Perfection 417

Sympathy as Love 418

Sympathy as Justice 425

    Love and Justice 427

Problems in this Interpretation of Divine Goodness. . 429

    Is *Agape* "Appropriate" Love? 429
    Is Divine Freedom Preserved 433
    Is God Personal? 437

Necessary Goodness and Divine Perfection 441

The Moral of the Story 444

CHAPTER X

SYMPATHY AS MORAL EXCELLENCE

The Specification of Moral Perfection

We have been concerned to examine how adequately the category of Sympathy provides a satisfactory account of the metaphysical perfection of God. Now we must turn to that other aspect of the divine goodness with which our entire study has been most concerned, His moral excellence, and see whether the category of Sympathy provides equally well for that.

As was indicated at the outset, Christian thinkers at least, and probably most great ethical teachers of all cultures, would agree that the heart of moral excellence is best described in terms of Love and of Justice. The teaching of Jesus and the New Testament, as well as of such centrally important theologians as Augustine, Luther and Wesley, makes abundantly clear the priority of Love.[1] The importance of Justice as formal equity or impartiality, is secondary but nevertheless real, as the long history of doctrines of the atonement is sufficient to show.[2] The present problem

---

[1] Such important passages as Matt. 22:35-40, I Cor. 13, I John 2-4, symbolize the New Testament ethos; for Augustine's treatment see Nygren, Part II, Vol. II, 234 ff.; for Luther the central reference is "The Liberty of a Christian," Works, II, 295 ff.; for Wesley, see supra, Chapter VI passim. Cf. Ramsey, chap. iii, for a good recent treatment of the topic.

[2] Ibid., chaps. i, ii, offer an excellent discussion of Biblical "righteousness," even though slightly biased

may thus be restated in more concrete terms: does the nature of God, conceived specifically in terms of divine Sympathy, necessarily involve supreme Love and Justice? The validity of this statement of the question is reinforced by the consideration that there are other humanly experienced moral values--courage, self-control, temperance, etc.--which are not at all applicable to God.[1] But these two, supreme for men, are supremely relevant for Him also.

Sympathy as Love

In view of the discussion in the preceding chapter it would seem clear that Sympathy and Love are closely related. Yet the nature of their connection needs careful statement.[2] Beginning with the traditional divine attributes of omniscience and omnipresence, we interpreted these as God's perfectly vivid, perfectly just, perfectly universal apprehension of, concern for, and relevance to all things. Such relevance and presence we found could be summed up in the one term Sympathy, which by a reasonable interpretation of its

---

against all "legalism."

[1] Cf. Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 147 ff.

[2] Cf. John C. Bennett's doubt that the kind of universal Sympathy developed by Hartshorne as the heart of his doctrine of God--a conception essentially the same as the one being considered here--really means Love. He is inclined to think it may be only "creative cohesion." That such "creative cohesion" and perfect insight does constitute Love is what we are now concerned to demonstrate. See Bennett, Christendom, VII, 104. Cf. the similar warning by H. R. Mackintosh, Christian Apprehension of God, against confusing the cosmic eros of classical thought with the Christian affirmation that God is love, pp. 180, 183.

common usage suggests all these elements, at least when they are rightly understood.

For each man such divine Sympathy must mean God's intimate understanding and personal interest. Self-knowledge is usually thought of as most intimate, and self-interest as most vivid. But in the great verses of the Bible concerning the divine omniscience we find testimony that God knows and hence loves us _better_ than we know and love ourselves. Our care for and interest in ourselves flags, but God's does not. He knows the force and quality of our every inward impulse, as well as its destiny in outer act. If there is any goodness in us, He is aware of it better than we. He knows equally well our temptations and evil motives. He is able to assess the extent of our moral responsibility, the force of mitigating and condemning circumstances, the role of that whole hidden self which each one carries about in the subconscious. Indeed, the very notion of degrees of moral responsibility becomes intelligible only in the light of omniscient divine Sympathy as a regulative idea.[1]

Something of the meaning of such divine understanding is suggested in the well-known essay by William James, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings."[2] No matter how much _external_ knowledge of other persons we may have, James pointed

---

[1] F. R. Tennant, _The Concept of Sin_ (Cambridge: University Press, 1912), pp. 222, 245.

[2] William James, _Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals_ (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1906), pp. 229 ff.

out, we fall far short of a full discernment of the inner quality and meaning of their lives. We are blind--and thus unappreciative and unloving. But it is just this quality of complete perceptiveness which we attribute to God in understanding His omniscience as Sympathy in the eminent degree. It was to this faith that Blake gave classic expression in one of his Songs of Innocence:

> Can I see another's woe
> And not be in sorrow too?
> . . . .
> Can a father see his child
> Weep, nor be with sorrow fill'd?
> . . . .
> And can he who smiles on all
> Hear the wren with sorrows small,
> Hear the small bird's grief and care,
> Hear the woes that infants bear,
>
> And not sit beside the nest,
> Pouring pity in their breast;
> And not sit the cradle near,
> Weeping tear on infant's tear?[1]

The New Testament is rich in indications that just such a loving Sympathy is essentially characteristic of God. In the tremendous parable of the Last Judgment, Jesus suggests that the "King" will have identified Himself so intimately with the lot of men on earth that whatever has been done for them will have been done literally to Him.[2] Torrey translates the puzzling "Be ye perfect" of Matt. 6:48, as "Be ye therefore all-including (in your good will), even as your heavenly Father includes all."[3] The suggestion of an all-

---

[1] Alfred Kazin (ed.), The Portable Blake (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), p. 97.

[2] Matt. 25:31-46.

[3] Charles Cutler Torrey, The Four Gospels, A New Translation (2d ed.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947), p. 12.

embracing grasp in Sympathy is unmistakable. In view of these implications of omniscience or universal Sympathetic perception, it is curious to find William Adams Brown stating that omniscience "has no necessary moral content."[1] Rather, it would seem that properly understood divine omniscience must be virtually identical with Love, with moral goodness.

In a recent critical analysis of the meaning of ethical experience, Garnett concludes that the essence of moral effort is "an effort to retain our vision of the larger and more rational perspective, in which all values are seen together, the near and the distant, the familiar and the unfamiliar, our own and those of other persons."[2]

This is a precise description of what God does, only without the effort. That is, He necessarily, by virtue of His very nature, exhibits the character which defines the ethical goal of man. To the same effect Paul Elmer More has said that Love "is that outreaching power of the imagination by which we grasp and make real to ourselves the being of others."[3] W. R. Matthews insists that "a settled will for the good of the beloved" is an essential ingredient in the meaning of Love. Yet he also points out that even in this notion of a good will

> the sympathetic imagination plays an indispensable part. For it is not enough to have a theoretical grasp of the general meaning of good or a rational conception of the

---

[1] Brown, p. 111. [2] Garnett, p. 225.

[3] Paul Elmer More, The Christ of the New Testament (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1924), p. 123.

> logic of values; in order effectively to love anyone we must apply our ideas of value to the concrete case and condition of the individual.[1]

That the goal of man, the end toward which "goodness" is directed, is community, or "existence in love," to use Brunner's phrase, is a commonplace.[2] But this again is a matter of sympathy, of the "capacity to assimilate the interest of another individual with one's own, to allow him, as it were, to partake in one's own personality."[3] This is illustrated in the life of John Woolman, the eighteenth century Quaker who carried on a life-long prophetic ministry against slavery and every kind of exploitation and left an intimate record of his ideas and motivations in his Journal. In the following passage he records an experience of central importance in this ministry:

> In a time of sickness. . .I was brought so near the gates of death that I forgot my name. Being then desirous to know who I was, I saw a mass of matter of a dull gloomy colour between the south and the east, and was informed that this mass was human beings in as great misery as they could be, and live, and that I was mixed with them, and that henceforth I might not consider myself as a distinct or separate being.[4]

---

[1] Matthews, pp. 230 f. Cf. the discussion by Montague of the relationship of conscience and imagination, pp. 39 f.; also Reinhold Niebuhr, Interpretation of Christian Ethics, p. 93, on the contribution of imagination.

[2] Brunner, Divine Imperative, chap. xvi.

[3] Richard Roberts, The Christian God ("Merrick Lectures," 1928; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), pp. 92 f., quoting William Trotter, The Herd Instinct in Peace and War.

[4] The Journal of John Woolman, with an introduction by John Greenleaf Whittier (London: Headley Brothers, n.d.), p. 239.

Out of this experience of sympathetic identification with his fellow-men Woolman was able to write "Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes" with such insight as this:

> In procuring slaves on the coast of Africa, many children are stolen privately; wars are encouraged among the negroes, but *all is at a great distance*. Many groans arise from dying men which we hear not. Many cries are uttered by widows and fatherless children which reach not our ears. Many cheeks are wet with tears, and faces sad with unutterable grief, which we see not. . . .
>
> Were we, for the term of one year only, to be eye-witnesses of what passeth in getting these slaves; were the blood that is there shed to be sprinkled on our garments; were the poor captives, bound with thongs, and heavily laden with elephants' teeth, to pass before our eyes. . .were we to behold and hear these things, what pious heart would not be deeply affected with sorrow![1]

Immediately following, Woolman points out the connection between the kind of sympathy which ethical concern requires, and the Sympathy of God:

> Our gracious Creator cares and provides for all his creatures; his tender mercies are over all his works, and so far as true love influences our minds, so far we become interested in his workmanship. . . .Here we have a prospect of one common interest from which our own is inseparable, so that to turn all we possess into the channel of universal love becomes the business of our lives.[2]

H. R. Mackintosh points out the correlation between divine "nearness" and divine Love, reinforcing our identification of omniscience, omnipresence and Sympathy, and interpreting them in ethical terms. This idea of the nearness of God, he says, is peculiarly Christian in quality, yet also something which links itself without difficulty to religious intuition outside the Christian tradition. In the Old Testa-

---

[1] Woolman, p. 30 (italics ours). [2] *Ibid*., p. 31.

ment idea of the covenant the thought is constantly present, that God has drawn near to His people in grace and Love. Above all

> in Jesus, holiness and nearness are indistinguishably united. The very person, in whom the unapproachable holiness and loftiness of God is once for all made palpable to human feeling, is He in whom God comes closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet.[1]

A modern scientist, reflecting on the religious conviction that God is merciful, notes that "there appears but little mercy in the severe discipline by which the mills of the gods grind out organisms adapted to their environment." Where then is it found? It is experienced in an apprehension of the sympathetic knowledge which God has of each individual.

> This mercy is real, but is to be found in the psychological rather than the physical realm. The knowledge that one has done his best, though in vain, the recognition that both God and our fellows know the limitations and frailties of our human nature and do not expect of us more than our strength permits, these protect us from the too keen cutting edge of conscience. Here it is that a sane, well-balanced religion. . .helps men to feel the understanding and sympathetic presence of their Creator.[2]

With this we may compare the comment of Pierre Vinet: "The Christian faith does not consist in the belief that we are saved, but in the belief that we are loved."[3]

---

[1] Mackintosh, Christian Apprehension of God, pp. 173 ff., 178.

[2] Arthur H. Compton, "A Modern Conception of God," Arthur H. Compton et al, Man's Destiny in Eternity ("Garvin Lectures"; Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949), p. 18.

[3] Quoted by Hazelton, p. 91. The lines of Louis Untermeyer's "Caliban in the Coal Mines" seem relevant here:

God, we don't like to complain-
  We know that the mine is no lark-
But-There's the pools from the rain,

Such was the experience of New Testament Christianity. "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses. . . .Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."[1] Nor is it an accident that the greatest description of the meaning of Love in all literature sounds the same note as it draws to its climax: "Now I *know* in part; then I shall *understand* fully, even as I have been fully *understood*. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."[2]

Sympathy as Justice

At the outset it was suggested that "goodness" as commonly understood in the moral experience of mankind means a synthesis of Love and Justice. Justice means, essentially, Order in moral or personal relations: giving to each his due[3] "equality according to 'desert.'"[4] It is the aspect of ap-

---

But-There's the cold and the dark.

God, *You don't know what it is-*
You in your well-lighted sky. . .

(italics ours. No published source for this is known to me. Dr. Vere V. Loper provided a manuscript copy.)

[1] Heb. 4:15 f. [2] I Cor. 13:12 f., (italics ours).

[3] The classical idea, which was generally accepted in Christian thought. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes*, I, 754. "'Righteousness' includes all the duties of equity, that every man may receive what is his due."

[4] Brunner, *Doctrine of God*, p. 277. Brunner rejects this idea of justice, at least in connection with God. He wishes to assimilate it to the Biblical "righteousness of God" which is really identical with redemptive love. This impulse is fundamentally sound as our whole argument for the primacy of Sympathetic Love shows. But to redefine the term

propriateness in that perfectly impartial Love which Sympathy implies. God sees the interests of all and sees them together, in perfectly balanced concern and in perfect understanding. He understands and loves equally both the murderer and his victim, each for what he is, in the fullest and most inward sense. His response to each must then in the nature of the case be just. Indeed, it is precisely that response which would constitute the definition of Justice, as Hartshorne points out:

> There can be no ethical appeal beyond the decision of the one who in his decision takes account of all actuality and possibility. To what could the appeal be made? . . .Dewey is theologically right. . .in arguing that the basis of ethical decision is the total, unique, concrete situation. . . .There could not be a wrong decision which thus took account of the situation; for a right decision can be defined as one adequately informed as to its context.[1]

"just" so as to leave no word for the aspect of Order, appropriateness, normative judgment, in moral experience is no service; for that aspect is essential. It is the synthesis of this aspect with that of pure sympathetic affirmation of the other which constitutes the fullness of divine Love. The necessity of this double aspect is really recognized by Brunner in his Justice and the Social Order, trans. Mary Hottinger (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1945), Part I, especially chap. xv. Cf. Ramsey, pp. 2 ff., on the "righteousness of God" for a view similar to Brunner's. The fact that Ramsey's system never does offer an adequate ground for ethical order confirms the judgment made here.

[1] Hartshorne, Divine Relativity, p. 125; cf. Journal of Liberal Religion, VIII, 38; Philosophy of Santayana, pp. 145 f. The parallel in all this to the Socratic conviction of the unity of all virtues in knowledge is patent. Ramsey, pp. 203 ff., points out the corresponding Christian theory of the unity of all virtues in love. Is it too daring to surmise that in the supreme instance of knowledge which is perfect Love, we have a synthesis of these insights?

Love and Justice

As a matter of fact, the more profound interpretations of Love and Justice in the theological tradition have long since recognized that the two factors are not in conflict--not even necessarily in paradoxical tension. Rather they are two sides of the same thing. It is failure to recognize this that has led to so much faulty thinking about the atonement. There is nothing in God which needs to be placated; nor is He constrained by some external norm of justice to which He must ensure satisfaction's being made. "The judgment of God cannot be separated from his love," says Aulén, "but is, finally, simply an expression of his benevolence." Even the Biblical expressions about God "hardening" sinners must be interpreted in this sense, as the hardening reaction of sin itself when confronted by pure Love.[1] As Brunner points out, God's "wrath" even for Luther is only the other side of His infinitely serious Love.[2] The connection between the "righteousness" of God and His grace or Love as the Bible understands them, has been pointed out as one of Luther's great discoveries. Upon the basis of this identification Ramsey develops his whole structure of Christian ethics.[3] Working from a different point of view, Tillich agrees with this coincidence of Love and Justice: "Judgment

---

[1] Aulén, Faith of the Christian Church, pp. 171 ff.

[2] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 170; cf. pp. 231 f.

[3] Ramsey, pp. 2-24.

is an act of love which surrenders that which resists love to self-destruction."[1] Speaking in terms of the cognate idea of "holiness," Ferré points out that "God is entirely love and love is entirely holy, for holiness is the infinite purity of love or internal self-consistency of its nature."[2] Likewise H. R. Mackintosh affirms "that love and holiness are one in God, despite their seeming antagonism."[3]

It is precisely through understanding this coincidence of Love and Justice in God that we avoid that dilution of the idea of divine holiness which Matthews warns is often an accompaniment of much stress upon God's Love. He is quite right in saying that "nothing could be further from the New Testament conception of God than that of the 'good fellow' of Omar, or of the deity whose *métier* it is to forgive, of the dying Heine."[4] But rather than approaching the divine Love through the divine holiness, as he urges--a procedure likely to involve that subordination of God's moral to His metaphysical glory of which the dangers have been vividly illustrated for us in the thought of Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli--we need only approach divine Love with an understanding of its real character and its basis in the very nature of deity. Nothing could be less sentimental than the

---

[1] Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, I, 283.

[2] Ferré, p. 115.

[3] H. R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology, Schleiermacher to Barth* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), p. 159.

[4] Matthews, p. 80.

perfectly universal and perfectly discerning Sympathy of God. Tillich has said that "love alone can transform itself according to the concrete demands of every individual and social situation without losing its eternity and dignity and unconditional validity."[1] It is precisely this character which divine Love, properly understood, exhibits.

Problems in This Interpretation of Divine Goodness

-Is Agape "Appropriate" Love?

According to one of the most influential recent interpretations of the character of divine Love, agape, our analysis of God's goodness in terms of a perfect Sympathy which issues in absolutely appropriate Love for all creatures might be thought sub-Christian. For as Nygren develops his interpretation, agape is Love which is absolutely "spontaneous and 'uncaused,'" and completely "indifferent to human merit."[2] Farmer, too, emphasizes that God's Love is "universal, non-selective."[3] The stock illustration is that employed by Jesus, of the sun shining on just and unjust alike, and the rain falling equally on all.[4]

---

[1] Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era, trans. with concluding essay by James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 155. After all, as Farmer warns, God and Men, pp. 166 ff., in our eagerness to avoid sentimentality we do not want to swing all the way over to a purely rigid and mechanical distributive justice in God. To approach it in this way seems well calculated to keep all interests in the best balance.

[2] Nygren, I, 52 f. [3] Farmer, God and Men, p. 140.

[4] Matt. 5:45. It is interesting to note that from a point of view very similar to that expressed in this essay, Whitehead can say that love "is a little oblivious to mor-

On this point several things must be said. First, no interpretation of the Love of God could stress its impartiality more than the one we have developed. Not only have we affirmed this, but we have shown why it must be so, by virtue of God's very nature. This is an intensification of the emphasis called for by the proponents of agape for it provides reasons for that which they simply affirm. This may be taken for granted: God is no respecter of persons; He loves all alike, Pharisee and publican (a fact which becomes even more clear in this context than it is in the gospels at some points.)

But the universality, the formal impartiality, of God's Love is not such that it is "uncaused" in the absolute sense of having no reference to any character in its objects whatsoever. For one thing, if God's Love is completely spontaneous or uncaused it becomes as mechanical and impersonal as the sun and the rain whose generosity is so much admired. It must be borne in mind that when Jesus spoke of the generosity of natural processes, he was interpreting them as the specific gifts of a highly personal God, the Lord of nature, not simply as general meteorological phenomena. He saw God not so much generous to all as to each--which is quite different. To be sure, it is not difference in "merit" to which He responds. But this does not mean that His Love is in no

---

als." He obviously shares the insight which the theologians are trying to preserve; see Hartshorne, Philosophy of Whitehead, p. 553.

sense at all a response. It is a response, quite specifically, to the reality of each person as a person. To say that there is no cause for God's Love is to say that He is oblivious to, unaware of, the persons He loves. For even to perceive another is to respond to him.[1] As Buber says, both members of the man-God relation react to and need the other.[2]

We may, therefore, abandon this faulty concept of an absolutely "uncaused" divine Love and admit that for God, as for men, recognition, interest, response, evaluation are indispensable elements in Love. The vital difference is that for God that interest and evaluation are perfect, as ours never are. They correspond to the criterion suggested by Jesus for perfect Love: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[3] God loves each being as it would care for itself if it had perfect knowledge of itself. This is all that could be asked. If one tries to think through just what kind of Love he should like God to have for him, he discovers that it is just this, no more and no less, that he wants and needs: that God love him for his own sake as he loves himself or tries to do at his best.[4]

---

[1] Hartshorne, Man's Vision of God, pp. 115 ff. Cf. Ritschl, p. 277: "Love is will aiming either at the appropriation of an object or at the enrichment of its existence, because moved by a feeling of its worth." This can be overstressed and consequently twisted as Ritschl appears to do; but there is a valid insight at the bottom of the saying.

[2] Buber, I and Thou, pp. 82 f.

[3] Matt. 22:39.

[4] Cf. Ramsey, pp. 157 ff., on the Christian meaning of self-love.

[illegible]

[illegible] against this reality [illegible] love so greatly that [illegible] recognition, respect, reverence, everything [illegible] in love. [illegible] and attention [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

That Love ought to be thus appropriate has been affirmed throughout the Christian tradition, by the medieval scholastic theologians,[1] by Wesley,[2] by such modern thinkers as von Hügel.[3] To deny it seems absurd. For God to love a louse, a lion, a satyr, and a saint with exactly the same Love is both unthinkable (in the literal sense of the term; no conception can be had of this state of affairs) and unnecessary. When Nygren talks about God's Love being spontaneous and uncaused, he is obviously confining his attention to the human sphere alone.[4] It is true that the differences among men are so slight in comparison with their common humanity (particularly as God sees them, with full knowledge of all the inner as well as the outer aspects of each life) that one might generalize an absolute uniformity of divine Love for them all. Even in this there is no great value, however, for each of us would rather be loved for himself and in respect to his individual needs and capacities, than to have the divine Love shower on us as blindly as rain. But there is no reason to confine God's Love to mankind. Indeed, to do so is neither scriptural[5] nor rational, for it makes God's relations with His world totally unintelligible. For a truly universal and sovereign God it is clear that nothing

---

[1] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.20.4; cf. Matthews, p. 227.

[2] Wesley, Works, VII, 347.

[3] Friedrich von Hügel, The Reality of God, and Religion & Agnosticism, ed. Edmund G. Gardner (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1931), p. 125.

[4] Nygren, I, 52 f. [5] Cf. Matt. 6:25 ff.; Ps. 104:10-27.

is adequate but a universal and individually appropriate Love, concerned with the whole range of created being.[1]

Is Divine Freedom Preserved?

Most theologians have been tremendously concerned to maintain the freedom of God. We found Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli in particular insisting upon His utterly untrammeled sovereignty, regardless of the moral implications of that freedom. Upon this same theme Brunner dilates with gusto: God is perfectly free with respect to nature, the one "who can work miracles if He wishes, who can preserve and maintain the course of Nature, or can suspend it, or do away with it entirely."[2] He is completely free of all law as well;[3] His free action defines the good;[4] He is personal absolute will.[5] The motive for this emphasis, considering the grave difficulties both moral and rational into which it inevitably leads, is something of a mystery. No doubt it is partly the effect of that devotion to God which, as we have noted, conceives the function of theology to consist largely in "paying to Him metaphysical compliments."[6] Unfortunately this

---

[1] Albert Schweitzer's work on ethics has the merit of making this aspect of love clear, in spite of certain eccentricities in working out its implications; cf. The Philosophy of Civilization, Part II, Civilization and Ethics, trans. John Naish (London: A. & C. Black, 1923), chap. xxi.

[2] Brunner, Doctrine of God, p. 250.

[3] Brunner, Divine Imperative, p. 53. [4] Ibid., pp. 53 f.

[5] Brunner, Christianity and Civilization, p. 23.

[6] Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, p. 258.

particular compliment of conceiving Him according to the analogy of an absolute tyrant is quite dubious.[1]

On the other hand, there is a point of view firmly rooted in the Christian tradition which accepts the principle that God is free only to do good--and that, in fact, this is the highest definition of freedom. Whether or not this is universally true we shall examine presently; but for God the point seems exceedingly well taken. Augustine urges it,[2] as well as Aquinas.[3] Leibniz as a philosopher of great theological influence agrees.[4] Nygren himself proclaims that God's Love "is necessary, because it belongs to the very nature of God Himself,"[5] as does another stalwart Lutheran, Aulén.[6] From quite different points of view Ferré,[7] von Hügel,[8] and Taylor[9] state the same conclusion. With this point of view

---

[1] This is not to say that any of these thinkers necessarily do conceive God to be an absolute tyrant; in the case of the historical figures our analysis has shown to what extent they qualify the implications of their language on this score. There is another side in Brunner's thought in which he effectively counteracts the effect of the statements quoted. But the point remains, that if such language is used responsibly and precisely, it must mean absolute tyranny; and that no matter how used it is drawn from the sphere of human absolutism.

[2] Augustine, The City of God, trans. Marcus Dods (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), II.xxii, 31, p. 542.

[3] Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I.19.10; Summa Contra Gentiles, XXII.30.

[4] Leibniz, Theodicy, pp. 386 ff.

[5] Nygren, I, 52.

[6] Aulén, Faith of the Christian Church, p. 133.

[7] Ferré, p. 108.

[8] von Hügel, The Reality of God, pp. 121 ff.

[9] Taylor, Faith of a Moralist, I, 245 f.

our whole argument is congruent. God is Love because God is Sympathy. His moral perfection is a necessary implication and expression of His metaphysical nature.

If God is not necessarily good, what alternatives are there? It might be urged that God is free to abide by a set of moral norms somehow subsisting externally to Him, to reject them, or to accept them capriciously as He pleases. The champions of divine freedom would never suffer this, however, and we have already dealt with the difficulties in such a Platonic dualism of power and order. Again, it might be argued that God is free in the sense that His will defines the good. Therefore He is necessarily good but still free to do just as He pleases. The untenability of this position has also been suggested. A third alternative would be that God is free to do evil if He pleases. Since no theologian has ever asserted this view, so far as I know, we hardly need spend time on it. It would call for a violation of the moral order of the world for no reason (else it would not be evil to violate it); but since God is by common consent of all Christian thinkers made the ground of moral order, this possibility is only a fantasy.

Yet to affirm that God is free only to do and be the good by no means infringes upon the creative freedom which is legitimately assigned to Him. Many of the difficulties in this area have arisen from a failure to define adequately the meaning of the freedom contended for. The term must draw its content originally from human experience. But the oppo-

nents of human freedom, such as Edwards, have often brought much greater mental powers to bear upon it than its champions. It is usually based upon an act of faith purportedly verified by the individual's inner apprehension that he _is_ free although he cannot say just how or why.[1]

At this point much creative work has been done by the thinkers who have suggested the general outlines of a doctrine of God similar to that expounded in this paper. The best insights of such men as Peirce, Whitehead, and Hartshorne on the problem of freedom might be summed up in the following propositions: (a) the world is genuinely social; i.e., there is a plurality of real beings, not just a total One; (b) the meaning of time is the passage from potency into actuality; (c) the critical difference between potency and actuality is in degree of _definiteness_; thus, the potential, the future, is actually indeterminate to an indefinite degree; (d) the freedom of any being is a function of its relevance to a greater or lesser range of potentiality; i.e., its capacity to transform into actuality more or less of that indeterminate reality which constitutes the future; (e) the _locus_ of all potentiality in God is His literally infinite aspect; which means that (f) His freedom and creativity are infinite though not random. Given infinite time God can realize infinite possibilities; yet at any one moment His freedom consists chiefly in maintaining balance

---

[1] As in Wesley, _supra_, pp. 264 ff.

and order within the world while ensuring its progress through time. Finite beings share this freedom of creative power through participation in the infinite nature of God (participation does not mean identity but sympathetic sharing). At the same time they are ordered and controlled by the concrete character of His goodness, i.e., His universal Sympathy or relativity; but not rigidly or absolutely.[1]

Is God Personal?

A question certain to be raised by a doctrine of God such as this, in which a literally all-embracing Sympathy or Love is made the fundamental category for His nature, is that of divine personality. Does not such a view dissolve all the definiteness and freedom of genuinely personal being into a vague and sub-personal immanence?[2]

Any answer to this question must begin with a reminder of the difficulties involved in the notion of divine personality. Some of these were pointed out earlier, in Chapter VII. Theologians who are most belligerently suspicious of any "pantheistic" dilution of Biblical personalism are often surprisingly reticent in stating their own positive

---

[1] See the discussion by Hartshorne in "Chance, Love and Incompatibility," *Philosophical Review*, LXVIII (Sept., 1949), 429 ff.; *Journal of Philosophy*, XXIX, 421 ff.; "The Reality of the Past, the Unreality of the Future," *Hibbert Journal*, XXXVII, 246; *Man's Vision of God*, pp. 98 ff.; 328 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 347 ff., suggests the term "panentheism" as distinguishing this view from deism on the one hand and pantheism on the other.

doctrine at this point.[1] The fact is that divine personality can best be understood by means of the generalization of certain factors or categories in human personal experience to the absolutely eminent degree. It cannot very well be concretely visualized or imagined, simply in analogy with mankind. With this caveat in mind, we may proceed to indicate how the view which has been developed here provides for divine personal life at least as adequately as any other.

First, personality involves freedom; and the supremacy of divine freedom has just been discussed. God is more free, as the ground of all possibility, than any finite being; even though by virtue of His perfect Love He is also more responsible than any finite being. Second, personality means "life," i.e., capacity for that degree of sensitive response to environment, internal or external,[2] which distinguishes animate from inanimate being. God is supremely living, sensitive and responsive, adapting His purposes and interests with infinite skill to the real situation. Third, personality means consciousness, i.e., "feeling" or awareness. Our discussion of Being pointed out the vacuousness which haunts any concept of that category not based upon feeling, and developed Sympathy as a basic category precisely to meet this

---

[1] E.g., Brunner, Doctrine of God, says practically nothing.

[2] God's "environment" might well be entirely "internal"; but this would not preclude its being distinct from Him and quite free in an appropriately limited way. The way in which our own bodies constitute an "environment" for our spirits offers an analogy here.

problem. Fourth, personality means individuality. An individual is probably best defined in terms of two factors: determinateness or decidedness, as opposed to the indecisiveness of mere potentiality (the link here with traditional "pure actuality" is interesting); and integration, in contrast to the looseness with which entities without personal order are organized.[1] Again, this doctrine of God appears to provide the possibility of a supreme instance of both factors. The concrete being of God is precisely as definite as the world which is created by His Love. It is as much an integrated unity as the universe which is constituted by the perfect stability of His purpose and moral perfection.[2]

Two analogies may show further how the general point of view presented here makes it possible to satisfy the legitimate theological interest in divine personality. We have suggested that God's nature has a double aspect: its formal character of absolute integrity, righteousness, love, metaphysical supremacy, etc.; and its concrete fullness of sensitivity, responsiveness, appreciation, joy, and suffering. The former corresponds to the "character" of a human person which, although only relatively stable, constitutes the individuality of which we have just spoken. By the lat-

---

[1] Cf. Hartshorne, Philosophy of Whitehead, p. 549.

[2] Taylor, Faith of a Moralist, I, 382, makes much of this element: "To develop a genuine moral personality is to pass from a condition in which there is little more to connect the partial patterns than the periodicity of organic rhythm to one in which this periodicity itself becomes instrumentally subservient to 'dominant' pattern."

ter is indicated that sensitive vividness of existence which corresponds to "experience" in man. "Living experience patterned in terms of responsible character" might be at least a partial definition of divine personality.

A second analogy might be taken from the mind-body relation which is so essential an element in empirical human personality. If the nature of God be thought of as essentially constituted by Love or sympathetic grasp of and identification with the creatures of His world, and if that Love have the perfection of discernment and intensity which we have found reason to attribute to it, then it would seem quite in order to conceive the world as literally the body of God. God's consciousness thus becomes the universal dominant spiritual monad in the cosmic society, just as our spirits are the dominant monads in the societies of cellular organisms which constitute our bodies.[1] If this analogy be accepted, it provides at least a partial answer for that difficult problem of visualizing or imaging a cosmic Personality which has proved a major barrier to theistic faith for so many.

Whether or not these suggestions be taken as adequately providing for faith in a personal God, two final comments may be made. First, it remains for those who object to the general view that God is best described in terms of Sympathy or Love to offer any more valid and useful way of conceiving or providing for divine personality. Sheer affirmation with-

---

[1] Charles Hartshorne, "Leibniz's Greatest Discovery," Journal of the History of Ideas, VII (Oct., 1946), 411 ff.

out any specification of how and why is useless, or worse than useless, as Tillich's polemic against the usual ways of attributing a literal personality to God makes clear.[1] Second, the real theological significance of divine personality is bound up with its _functioning_ values in religion, i.e., in piety, in the "divine-human encounter." This view of God judges all that is said about Him by the fundamental premise of divine Love, intimate knowledge, universal presence, perfect justice, unlimited freedom, infinite richness of inner life--all characteristics which follow, as we have tried to show, from the use of Sympathetic Love as a basic category. Such a concept of deity appears to meet every interest which the faith in a personal God would serve.

Necessary Goodness and Divine Perfection

One final question brings us to the most important result of this inquiry. The question is raised by the expression "necessary goodness." In human experience the two terms can hardly be joined. What we do necessarily can scarcely be _morally_ good. So at least most ethical teachers have insisted. Theologians likewise have generally agreed, whether by defining moral responsibility in terms of voluntary capacity as Wesley did, or by denying that any of the

---

[1] Tillich, _Systematic Theology_, I, 244 f. His terming God the "absolute participant" comes very close to suggesting the very doctrine expounded here. But he dissolves the whole matter in a mist of "symbolism." Cf. the argument for _literal_ divine personality in Hartshorne, _Theology of Tillich_, p. 179, making common cause with Barth!

good which the elect do is meritorious since it is done solely by the grace of God.[1] How then can God meaningfully be called "good," i.e., morally perfect, when He does good of necessity?

The answer seems to be as simple as it is significant. God can be necessarily good because He is God. This--the perfect union of moral and metaphysical goodness--is, in the most literal and specific sense, the meaning of His deity. His nature is such, by virtue of His very situation as God, that He cannot fail to do the best possible thing in every given circumstance. For God, as for no creature, perfect altruism coincides completely with self-interest, since God's interest, as the binding Love of the universe, is the well-being of every finite thing.

Through the centuries theologians have grasped for ways to express the elemental intuition that God is "wholly other" from ourselves, high and lifted up, God and not man. They have sought to specify His transcendent glory in many ways: by making Him an ineffable One beyond all thought, by exalting His arbitrary Power beyond the limits of all law and reason, by assigning to Him sole Reality, or by making Him an abstract principle of Reason or Order far above the sphere of time, change, and human suffering. As a result God's goodness has been twisted and distorted in a way which is literally insane. The schizophrenia of a separation be-

---

[1] Garnett, p. 127; Tennant, Philosophical Theology, II, 186, 189 ff.; Sorley, pp. 505 ff.

tween His moral perfection and His metaphysical excellence has all too often prevailed. Even where these were joined together verbally no clear expression was given of their genuine togetherness. No reason was shown for holding that in God those two kinds of goodness which are so tragically separated in finite experience must be united.

Without any attempt to claim finality for this only too inadequate analysis of the greatest of all problems, it is our hope that in some such account of God as this the age-old and tragic antinomy can be brought nearer resolution. For the unutterable glory of the transcendent God must be seen to be such that in Him an absolute metaphysical supremacy of Being, Power, and Order is one coordinate aspect of a divine excellence whose heart is Love. This is His true greatness, a perfection which of its very nature necessarily combines moral and metaphysical goodness. The inadequacy of many traditional doctrines has lain in their attempt, not to make God too different from man, but too much in man's own image. The "Wholly Other" turns out, all too often, to be simply more of the Same Old Thing, i.e., of the all too human tension between greatness and goodness. Aware that in our experience power corrupts, theologians have come perilously close to describing God in terms which would bear out the inference that absolute power corrupts absolutely. Even fine terms like "sovereignty" or "glory" or "transcendence" scarcely cover the shame of such unintended blasphemy. It is quite true that with man greatness of power or will or intellect or

creative talent has no necessary connection with moral goodness. But God is not man. He is God; and as the truly all-knowing, ever present, fully responsible, perfectly sensitive deity, He can do no other than create and rule with the infinite power of infinite patience and wisdom, and the infinite love of which the vicarious suffering of Christ is the convincing token.

The Moral of the Story

This story of Divine Goodness has been long in the telling, and unavoidably so. In order to grasp the problems it raises we have been constrained to examine details of doctrine precious to the minds of men long since turned to dust --and largely unintelligible to most men now living. In striving for a positive statement which should both clarify its meaning and vindicate its reality it has been necessary to offer passages of tortuous analysis in which the living body of faith seemingly has been cut to its very bone and nerve. Now that this telling of the story is completed, it is wise to pause for a final moment and ask, What does it all mean? Is there a moral to the tale?

One conclusion is obvious. We have not been led to disagree fundamentally with any of the great Christian teachers. To the best of their ability and in terms which for them were most meaningful and convincing, they all tried to express the conviction that in God is supreme metaphysical excellence and at the same time supreme moral excellence.

His is a goodness of Power and Order and Being, of Love and Justice, worthy of man's unconditional worship and grateful service.

A second conclusion also, not so positive but equally inescapable, has been forced upon us. In the traditional handling of the subject of Divine Goodness the positive insights of piety and faith have been obscured and weakened to a quite intolerable degree. Of the five great Protestant thinkers subjected here to careful scrutiny, only Hooker and Wesley give anything like an unambiguous witness to divine moral goodness; and Wesley alone makes the Love of God the real center of his thought. What accounts for this curious and distressing character of Christian doctrine?

The chief difficulty seems to be that which faced the traveler in the familiar anecdote. At a loss in unfamiliar territory, he asked the Irishman (or Vermonter or Bantu--the story is ancient) how to get to Dublin. After some head-scratching the native replied, "Well, if I wanted to get to Dublin,I wouldn't start from here." The precise nub of the problem of Divine Goodness seems to be that of choosing a proper starting place.

Traditionally, theologians have usually started with the metaphysical perfection of God. Moreover, they often have begun by envisaging that perfection by analogy with some human model of great social prominence: the absolute Tyrant, the poised and self-sufficient Thinker, the righteous Judge, and so on. Having piled high their adjectives in order to

render unto God the things that are Caesar's, they then turned their attention to the topic of His moral perfection. In moving passages of heartfelt eloquence they expatiated upon the Divine Goodness to the children of men--at least, to some of them. The two discussions were then bound between the covers of one book, and the result offered to the church and the world as a doctrine of the God and Father of Jesus Christ. But the whole just did not hang together, and the church and the world have become less and less convinced. The moral of this story therefore is that you must not start from "here"--from worldly ideas about Power or Order or Being--if you want to get to the full reality of the Divine Goodness offered in the language and concepts of faith in the New Testament. On this road one moves through a great deal of spectacular ontological scenery but it is hard to find the turning which leads to the Father's house.

On the other hand, our telling of the story has indicated that by starting from the Love of God, from His moral perfection, it is possible to arrive at a balanced understanding of Divine Goodness which includes metaphysical perfection as well. The last two chapters of this essay represent an attempt to demonstrate at least one way in which this journey might be made. In the interests of intellectual humility and caution, and for the sake of greater persuasiveness for those not already committed to the good news of Divine Goodness, we began not with the full doctrine of personal Divine Love; but rather with that universal intimacy of God

with His world which the best insights of science, philosophy and piety alike suggest. The implications of this divine omniscience and omnipresence were carefully recounted. The result indicated that in the concept of God as universal and pervasive Sympathy the requirements for divine supremacy of Power and Order and Being were adequately met.

Moreover, it also seemed evident that in such Sympathy divine Love and Justice were clearly implied as well. The moral perfection of a genuinely personal God appeared to be a legitimate deduction from this Sympathy to which both ontological speculation and religious experience point. In this fashion the age-old tragic tensions between metaphysical and moral perfection appear to be removed and the way cleared for faith in a Divine Goodness acceptable alike to the most rigorous thought and to the most kindling piety. If this be in any degree true, no story could have been more worth telling.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, Alexander V. G. *The Continuity of Christian Thought, A Study of Modern Theology in the Light of its History.* 4th ed. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887.

Acuinas, Thomas. *Selected Political Writings.* Translated by J. G. Dawson. Edited with introduction by A. P. D'Entreves. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948.

________. *Summa Contra Gentiles.* Translated by the English Dominican Fathers. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1924.

________. *Summa Theologica.* Translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 2d and revised ed. London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1920.

Aristotle. *The Basic Works of Aristotle.* Edited with introduction by Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.

Augustine. *The City of God.* Translated by Marcus Dods. 2 vols. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871.

________. *The Confessions of St. Augustine.* The Literary Guild of America, n.d.

Aulén, Gustaf. *Christus Victor, An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement.* Translated by A. G. Hebert. American ed. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951.

________. *The Faith of the Christian Church.* Translated from the 4th Swedish ed. by Eric H. Wahlstrom and G. Everett Arden. Philadelphia: The Muhlenberg Press, 1948.

Baillie, Donald M. *God Was in Christ, An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement.* London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1949.

Baillie, John. *Our Knowledge of God.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939.

Bainton, Roland H. *Here I Stand, A Life of Martin Luther.* New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1950.

Bayne, Ronald. "Richard Hooker," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. Edited by James Hastings. Vol. VI, 1928.

Baker, Rannie Belle. *The Concept of a Limited God, A Study in the Philosophy of Personalism*. Washington D.C.: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1934.

Bakewell, Charles M. *Source Book in Ancient Philosophy*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907.

Barth, Karl. *Die Kirkliche Dogmatik*. Vol. II, Part II, *Die Lehre von Gott*. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, A. G. Zollikon, 1942.

________. *The Epistle to the Romans*. Translated from 6th ed. by Edwyn C. Hoskyns. London: Oxford University Press, 1933.

________. *The Word of God and the Word of Man*. Translated by Douglas Horton. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935.

Bennett, John C. "Three Levels of Persuasiveness," *Christendom*, VII (Winter, 1942), 102-4.

Bergendorf, C. J. I. "The Sphere of Revelation," *Official Register of Harvard University*, XLVI (April 25, 1949), 21-34.

Bevan, Edwyn. *Later Greek Religion*. "The Library of Greek Thought"; Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950.

Beza, Theodore. *The Life of John Calvin*. Translated by Francis Sibson. Philadelphia: J. Whetham, 1836.

Bixler, Julius Seelye. *Religion in the Philosophy of William James*. Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1926.

Boehmer, Heinrich. *Luther & the Reformation in the Light of Modern Research*. Translated by E. S. G. Potter. New York: Lincoln MacVeagh, The Dial Press, 1930.

Bonnet, Jules (ed.). *Letters of John Calvin*. 4 vols. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858.

Bowman, Archibald Allan. *Studies in the Philosophy of Religion*. Edited with introduction by Norman Kemp Smith. Vol. II. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1938.

Brandt, Richard B. *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher, The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge*. New York: Harpers & Brothers Publishers, 1941.

Brightman, Edgar Sheffield. A Philosophy of Religion. New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940.

________. The Finding of God. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931.

________. The Problem of God. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1931.

Broad, C. D. The Mind and its Place in Nature. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949.

Brown, William Adams. Christian Theology in Outline. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914.

Browning, Robert. "Pippa's Song." A. T. Quiller-Couch (ed.), The Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1900. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904. P. 856.

Brunner, Emil. Christianity and Civilisation, Part I, Foundations. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948.

________. The Divine Imperative, A Study in Christian Ethics. Translated by Olive Wyon. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942.

________. The Divine-Human Encounter. Translated by Amandus W. Loos. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943.

________. Dogmatics, Vol. I, The Christian Doctrine of God. Translated by Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1950.

________. Dogmatics, Vol. II, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. Translated by Olive Wyon. London: Lutterworth Press, 1952.

________. Justice and the Social Order. Translated by Mary Hottinger. London: Lutterworth Press, 1946.

________. Man in Revolt, A Christian Anthropology. Translated by Olive Wyon. London: Lutterworth Press, 1939.

________. Our Faith. Translated by John W. Rilling. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

________. Reason and Revelation, The Christian Doctrine of Faith and Knowledge. Translated by Olive Wyon. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946.

Buber, Martin. Between Man and Man. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1947.

Buber, Martin. I and Thou. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937.

Buchler, Justus (ed.). The Philosophy of Peirce, Selected Writings. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950.

Buckham, John Wright. The Humanity of God, An Interpretation of the Divine Fatherhood. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1928.

Bushnell, Horace. Forgiveness and Law, Grounded in Principles Interpreted by Human Analogies. New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1874.

Calhoun, Robert L. Lectures on the History of Christian Doctrine. Privately circulated.

Calvin, John. Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Translated by William Pringle. Vol. III. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1846.

________. Commentary on the Book of Psalms. Translated by James Anderson. Vol. I. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845.

________. Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. Translated by William Pringle. Vol. II. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1851.

________. Institutes of the Christian Religion. Translated by John Allen. 7th American ed. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, n.d.

________. Instruction in Faith (1537). Translated with a Historical Foreword and Critical and Explanatory Notes by Paul T. Fuhrmann. London: Lutterworth Press, 1949.

________. A Selection of the Most Celebrated Sermons of John Calvin. Philadelphia: Desilver, Thomas & Co., 1835.

Cannon, William Ragsdale. The Theology of John Wesley, With Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946.

Carlson, Edgar M. The Reinterpretation of Luther. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1948.

Catlin, George. *The Story of the Political Philosophers.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939.

Cell, George Croft. *The Rediscovery of John Wesley.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1935.

Chesterton, G. K. *Orthodoxy.* New York: John Lane Company, 1913.

Clarke, William Newton. *An Outline of Christian Theology.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901.

Compton, Arthur H. "A Modern Concept of God," *Man's Destiny in Eternity*, "Garvin Lectures"; Boston: The Beacon Press, 1949. Pp. 1-20.

Cornford, Francis Macdonald. *Plato and Parmenides, Parmenides' Way of Truth and Plato's Parmenides.* Translated with an Introduction and a running Commentary. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1950.

———. *Plato's Cosmology, The Timaeus of Plato.* Translated with a running commentary. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 1948.

Craig, Hardin. *Shakespeare, A Historical and Critical Study with Annotated Texts of Twenty-one Plays.* Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1931.

Darr, John Whittier. "The Meaning of God for an Average Man," *Lectures on the Meaning of God in Modern Life.* "Scripps College Papers"; Claremont, Calif.: Scripps College, 1933. Pp. 1-18.

Demos, Raphael. *The Philosophy of Plato.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939.

Dewey, John. *Essays in Experimental Logic.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1916.

———. *Experience and Nature.* Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1925.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov.* Translated by Constance Garnett. New York: The Modern Library, n.d.

Eddington, A. S. *The Nature of the Physical World.* "Gifford Lectures," 1927; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929.

Edwards, Jonathan. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, With an Essay on His Genius and Writings by Henry Rogers, and Memoir by Sereno E. Dwight.* Revised and corrected by Edward Hickman. 10th ed. London: Henry G, Bohn, 1865.

Encyclopedia Britannica. 1952 ed. Vol. 11. Article, "Richard Hooker."

Farmer, Herbert H. *God and Men.* London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1948.

________. *The World and God, A Study of Prayer, Providence and Miracle in Christian Experience.* "Library of Constructive Theology"; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, n.d.

Farner, Oskar. *Huldrych Zwingli, Seine Entwicklung zum Reformator, 1506-1520.* Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946.

Farnell, Lewis Richard. *The Attributes of God.* "Gifford Lectures," 1924-25; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925.

Faust, Clarence H. and Johnson, Thomas H. *Jonathan Edwards, Representative Selections*, with Introduction, Bibliography, and Notes. "American Writers Series"; New York: American Book Company, 1935.

Ferré, Nels F. S. *The Christian Understanding of God.* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1951.

Fife, R. H. *Young Luther--The Intellectual and Religious Development of Martin Luther to 1518.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928.

Fisher, George Park. *History of Christian Doctrine.* "International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896.

Fosdick, Harry Emerson (ed.). *Great Voices of the Reformation.* New York: Random House, 1952.

Foss, Martin. *The Idea of Perfection in the Western World.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1946.

Foster, Frank Hugh. *A Genetic History of the New England Theology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907.

Freeman, Eugene. *The Categories of Charles Peirce.* Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1934.

Fuller, B. A. G. *A History of Philosophy.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938.

Garnett, A. Campbell. *The Moral Nature of Man, A Critical Evaluation of Ethical Principles*. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1952.

Gilson, Étienne. *Christianity and Philosophy*. Translated by Ralph MacDonald. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939.

———. *God and Philosophy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941.

———. *Jean Duns Scot*. Paris, Libraire Philosophique J. Vrin, 1952.

———. *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*. Translated by A. H. C. Downes. "Gifford Lectures," 1931-1932; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

Goodspeed, Edgar J. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937.

Gray, Henry David. *The Christian Doctrine of Grace*. London: Independent Press Ltd., 1949.

Grisar, Hartmann. *Martin Luther, His Life and Work*. Adapted from 2d German ed. by E. J. Eble. Edited by A. Preuss. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1930.

Harkness, Georgia. *Conflicts in Religious Thought*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929.

———. *John Calvin, The Man and His Ethics*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1931.

Haroutunian, Joseph. *Piety Versus Moralism, The Passing of the New England Theology*. "American Religion Series"; New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932.

Hartshorne, Charles. *Beyond Humanism, Essays in the New Philosophy of Nature*. Chicago: Willett, Clark & Company, 1937.

———. "Chance, Love and Incompatibility," *Philosophical Review*, LVIII (September, 1949), 429-50.

———. "Contingency and the New Era in Metaphysics," *Journal of Philosophy*, XXIX (August 4, 1932), 421-31.

———. "A Critique of Peirce's Idea of God," *Philosophical Review*, L (September, 1941), 516-23.

———. *The Divine Relativity, A Social Conception of God*, "Terry Lectures"; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948.

Hartshorne, Charles. "Ideal Knowledge Defines Reality: What Was True in 'Idealism,'" *Journal of Philosophy*, XLIII (October 10, 1946), 573-82.

———. "Leibniz's Greatest Discovery," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, VII (October, 1946), 411-21.

———. *Man's Vision of God, and the Logic of Theism.* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941.

———. "A New Philosophic Conception of the Universe," *Hibbert Journal*, XLIV (October, 1945-July, 1946), 14-21.

———. "On Some Criticisms of Whitehead's Philosophy," *Philosophical Review*, XLIV (July, 1935), 323-44.

———. *The Philosophy and Psychology of Sensation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934.

———. "The Reality of the Past, the Unreality of the Future," *Hibbert Journal*, XXXVII (October, 1938-July, 1939), 246-257.

———. Review of *Religion of a Scientist: Selections from Gustav Theodor Fechner.* Edited and translated by Walter Lowrie (New York: Pantheon, 1946). *Journal of Religion*, XXVII (April, 1947), 126-8.

———. "Santayana's Doctrine of Essence," *The Philosophy of George Santayana.* Edited by P. A. Schilpp. "The Library of Living Philosophers"; Evanston: Northwestern University, 1940. Pp. 135-182.

———. "Theological Values in Current Metaphysics," *Journal of Religion*, XXVI (July, 1946), 157-67.

———. "Tillich's Doctrine of God," *The Theology of Paul Tillich.* Edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall. "The Library of Living Theology"; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952. Pp. 164-195.

———. "Tragic and Sublime Aspects of Christian Love," *Journal of Liberal Religion*, VIII (Summer, 1946), 36-44.

———. "Whitehead's Idea of God," in *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.* Edited by P. A. Schilpp. "The Library of Living Philosophers"; Evanston: Northwestern University, 1941. Pp. 513-559.

Hartshorne, Charles. "Whitehead's Metaphysics," in Victor Lowe, Charles Hartshorne, A. H. Johnson, *Whitehead and the Modern World*, Science, Metaphysics, and Civilization, Three Essays on the thought of Alfred North Whitehead. Boston: Beacon Press, 1950. Pp. 25-41.

Hazelton, Roger. *The God We Worship*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. "The Logic of Hegel." Translated by William Wallace; in Benjamin Rand (ed.), *Modern Classical Philosophers*, Selections Illustrating Modern Philosophy from Bruno to Bergson. 2d ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924. Pp. 569-613.

Heim, Karl. *God Transcendent, Foundation for a Christian Metaphysic*. Translated from the 3rd German ed. by Edgar Primrose Dickie. Introduction by Edwyn Bevan. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

Hoashi, Riichiro. *The Problem of Omnipotence in Current Theology*. Private edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Libraries, 1918.

Hocking, William Ernest. *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, A Philosophic Study of Religion. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1912.

Hodge, Charles. *Systematic Theology*. Vol. I. New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873.

Hooker, Richard. *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. (Books I-IV.) Introduction by Henry Morley. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1888.

————. *The Works of That Learned and Judicious Divine, Mr. Richard Hooker*. Vol. II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885.

Hildebrandt, Franz. *From Luther to Wesley*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1951.

Horton, Walter Marshall. "Eugene W. Lyman: Liberal Christian Thinker," *Liberal Theology, An Appraisal*, Essays in Honor of Eugene William Lyman. Edited by David E. Roberts and Henry Pitney Van Dusen. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942. Pp. 3-44.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Vol. I. "Everyman Library"; London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1928.

Hume, David. *Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion.* Edited with an introduction by Norman Kemp Smith. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935.

Hunter, A. Mitchell. *The Teaching of Calvin, A Modern Interpretation.* 2d ed. revised. London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1950.

Inge, W. R. "Neo-Platonism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics.* Edited by James Hastings. Vol. IX, 1928.

Jackson, Samuel Macauley. *Huldreich Zwingli, The Reformer of German Switzerland, 1484-1531.* With a chapter on Zwingli's theology by Frank Hugh Foster. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1901.

James, William. *A Pluralistic Universe.* "Hibbert Lectures"; New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909.

________. *Talks to Teachers on Psychology: And to Students on Some of Life's Ideals.* New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1906.

________. *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy.* New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1908.

Kant, Immanuel. *Lectures on Ethics.* Translated Louis Infield. New York: The Century Co., n.d.

________. *The Critique of Pure Reason.* Translated by J. M. D. Meiklejohn. Revised ed. New York: The Colonial Press, 1900.

Kazin, Alfred (ed.). *The Portable Blake.* New York: The Viking Press, 1946.

Kepler, Johannes. *The Harmonies of the World*, in Robert Maynard Hutchins (ed.), *Great Books of the Western World.* Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952. Vol. XVI, 1005-1085.

Kepler, Thomas S. (ed.). *Theologica Germanica, The Way to a Sinless Life.* Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1952.

Kerr, Hugh Thomas, Jr. (ed.). *A Compend of Luther's Theology.* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943.

Kierkegaard, S. *Philosophical Fragments, or A Fragment of Philosophy.* Translated with introduction and notes by David Swenson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936.

Kirk, Kenneth E. *The Vision of God, The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum.* "Bampton Lectures," 1928. 2d ed. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937.

Knudson, Albert C. *The Doctrine of God*. New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930.

Kroner, Richard. *Culture and Faith*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Künzli, Edwin. *Zwingli als Ausleger von Genesis und Exodus*. Zürich: Buchdruckerei Berichthaus, 1950.

Lee, Umphrey. *John Wesley and Modern Religion*. Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1936.

Leibniz. *The Monadology and Other Philosophical Writings*. Translated with introduction and notes by Robert Latta. Oxford University Press, 1925.

__________, G. W. *Theodicy, Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man, and the Origin of Evil*. Translated by E. M. Huggard. Edited with introduction by Austin Farrer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952.

Lewis, Clarence Irving. *Mind and the World-Order, Outline of a Theory of Knowledge*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929.

Lewis, Edwin. *The Creator and the Adversary*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1948.

Lindsay, Thomas M. *A History of the Reformation*. Vol. II. "International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916.

Lindström, Harald. *Wesley and Sanctification, A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*. Stockholm: Nya Bokförlags Aktiebolaget, 1946.

Lotze, Hermann. *Microcosmus, An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World*. Translated by Elizabeth Hamilton and E. E. Constance Jones. 4th ed. Vol. II. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1894.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being, A Study of the History of an Idea*. "William James Lectures," 1933; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950.

Lucas, Henry S. *The Renaissance and the Reformation*. "Harper's Historical Series"; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1934.

Luther, Martin. *On the Bondage of the Will, Written in Answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus on Free-Will*. Translated by Henry Cole. London: T. Bensley, 1823.

Luther, Martin. *The Table-Talk of Martin Luther.* Translated by William Hazlitt. Revised ed. Philadelphia: United Lutheran Publication House, n.d.

________. *Works of Martin Luther*, with Introductions and Notes. 6 vols. Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company, 1915-1931.

Lyman, Eugene William. *The Meaning and Truth of Religion.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933.

Macdonald, Duncan Black. *The Hebrew Philosophical Genius, A Vindication.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936.

MacKinnon, James. *Calvin and the Reformation.* London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936.

Mackintosh, Douglas Clyde. *Theology as an Empirical Science.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919.

Mackintosh, H. R. *The Christian Apprehension of God.* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1929.

________. *The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ.* "International Theological Library"; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912.

________. *Types of Modern Theology, Schleiermacher to Barth.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937.

Maritain, Jacques. *A Preface to Metaphysics, Seven Lectures on Being.* New York: Sheed & Ward, 1939.

________. *Three Reformers, Luther--Descartes--Rousseau.* London: Sheed & Ward, 1947.

Marett, R. R. *Faith, Hope, and Charity in Primitive Religion.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1932.

Matthews, W. R. *God in Christian Experience.* "The Library of Constructive Theology"; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, n.d.

McConnell, Francis John. *Is God Limited?* New York: Abingdon Press, 1924.

________. *John Wesley.* New York: The Abingdon Press, 1939.

McNeill, John T. *Books of Faith and Power.* New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947.

________. "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," *Journal of Religion*, XXVI (July, 1946), 168-182.

McNeill, John T. "Natural Law in the Thought of Luther," *Church History*, X (September, 1941), 211-227.

Mill, John Stuart. *Autobiography*. London: Longmans, Green, Reader, & Dyer, 1873.

Miller, Perry. *The New England Mind, The Seventeenth Century*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939.

———. *Jonathan Edwards*. "The American Men of Letters Series"; William Sloane Associates, 1949.

Montague, W. P. *Belief Unbound, A Promethean Religion for the Modern World*. "Terry Lectures"; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930.

More, Paul Elmer and Cross, Frank Leslie (eds.). *Anglicanism, The Thought and Practice of the Church of England*, illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century. Milwaukee, Wis.: Morehouse Publishing Co., 1935.

More, Paul Elmer. *The Christ of the New Testament*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1924.

———. *The Sceptical Approach to Religion*. "New Shelburne Essays"; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1934.

Mozley, J. K. *The Impassibility of God, A Survey of Christian Thought*. Cambridge: University Press, 1926.

The New Testament. Revised Standard Version. New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1946.

Newton, Isaac. *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*. Translated by Andrew Motte, revised by Florian Cajori; in *Great Books of the Western World*. Edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1952. Vol. XXXIV, 1-372.

Nichols, James Hastings. *Democracy and the Churches*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1935.

———. *The Nature and Destiny of Man, A Christian Interpretation*, Vol. I, *Human Nature*. "Gifford Lectures," 1939; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941.

Nygren, Anders. *Agape and Eros, A Study of the Christian Idea of Love*. Translated by Philip S. Watson. 3 vols. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1941.

Old Testament. *The Complete Bible, An American Translation*. Translated by J. M. Powis Smith, et al. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939.

Oman, John. *Grace and Personality*. 4th ed. Cambridge: University Press, 1931.

Otto, Rudolf. *The Idea of the Holy*. Translated by John W. Harvey. London: Oxford University Press, 1923.

Paget, Francis. *An Introduction to the Fifth Book of Hooker's Treatise of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899.

Pascal, R. *The Social Basis of the German Reformation, Martin Luther and His Times*. London: Watts & Co., 1933.

Pauck, Wilhelm. *The Heritage of the Reformation*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950.

Pedersen, Johs. *Israel, Its Life and Culture, I-II*. London: Oxford University Press, 1946.

Pepper, Stephen C. "The Root Metaphor Theory of Metaphysics," *Journal of Philosophy*, XXXII (July 4, 1935), 365-74.

Piette, Maximin. *John Wesley in the Evolution of Protestantism*. Translated by J. B. Howard. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1937.

Plato, *Laws*. Translated by R. G. Bury, Vol. II. "Loeb Classical Library"; London: William Heineman, 1926.

________. *The Works of Plato*. Translated with Analyses and Introductions by B. Jowett. Four vols. complete in one. New York: Tudor Publishing Company, n.d.

Plotinus. *The Ethical Treatises, Being the Treatises of the First Ennead*. . . Translated by Stephen Mackenna. Vol. II. Boston: Charles T. Branford Company, n.d.

Pratt, James Bissett. *Personal Realism*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.

Pringle-Pattison, A. Seth. *The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy*. "Gifford Lectures," 1912-1913; Aberdeen: For the University, 1917.

Radhakrishnan, S. *Indian Philosophy*. Vol. I. "Library of Philosophy"; London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1923.

Rall, Harris Franklin. *The Meaning of God*. "Quillian Lectures," 1924; Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1928.

Ramsey, Paul. *Basic Christian Ethics*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950.

Randall, John Herman, Jr. "The Ontology of Paul Tillich," *The Theology of Paul Tillich*. Edited by Charles W. Kegley & Robert W. Bretall. "The Library of Living Theology"; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952, Pp. 131-161.

Rich, Arthur. *Die Anfänge der Theologie Huldrych Zwinglis*. Zürich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1949.

Richardson, Alan. *Christian Apologetics*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947.

Richardson, Cyril C. *Zwingli and Cranmer on the Eucharist*. Evanston, Ill.: Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, 1949.

Ritschl, Albrecht. *Justification and Reconciliation, The Positive Development of the Doctrine*. Translation edited by H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1900.

Roberts, Richard. *The Christian God*. "Merrick Lectures," 1928; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929.

Rood, Wayne. "Dark Amid the Blaze of Noon: Education and The Reformation." Unpublished Th.D. thesis, Pacific School of Religion, 1949.

Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, Rendered into English Verse by Edward Fitzgerald. Garden City, N.Y.: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1937.

Rupp, Gordon. *Luther's Progress to the Diet of Worms, 1521*. Chicago: Wilson and Follett Co., 1951.

Santayana, George. "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," in *The Philosophy of George Santayana*. Edited by P. A. Schilpp. "The Library of Living Philosophers"; Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1940.

Schaff, Philip. *The Creeds of Christendom, With a History and Critical Notes*. 3 vols. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1877.

________. *History of the Christian Church*. Vol. VII. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1892.

Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *The Christian Faith*. Translation of the 2d German ed. edited by H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948.

Schweitzer, Albert. The Philosophy of Civilization, Part II, Civilization and Ethics. Translated by John Naish. London: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 1923.

Schwiebert, Ernest George. Luther and His Times. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950.

Shedd, William G. T. Dogmatic Theology. Vol. I. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888.

Simpson, Samuel. Life of Ulrich Zwingli, The Swiss Patriot and Reformer. New York: The Baker & Taylor Co., 1902.

Sisson, C. J. The Judicious Marriage of Mr. Hooker and the Birth of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. Cambridge: University Press, 1940.

Smith, Preserved and Gallinger, Herbert Percival, (trans. and eds.). Conversations with Luther, Selections from the Tabletalk. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1915.

Smith, Preserved. The Life and Letters of Martin Luther. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911.

Sorley, W. R. Moral Values and the Idea of God. "Gifford Lectures," 1914-1915; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1924.

Spengler, Oswald. The Decline of the West. Translated by Charles Francis Atkinson. 2 vols. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939.

Tawney, R. H. Religion and the Rise of Capitalism. New York: The New American Library, 1950.

Taylor, A. E. The Faith of a Moralist, Series I, The Theological Implications of Morality. "Gifford Lectures," 1926-1928; London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1930.

________. Plato, The Man and His Work. 6th ed. London: Methuen and Co. Ltd., 1949.

Taylor, Henry Osborn. The Mediaeval Mind, A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages. Vol. II. London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1911.

Temple, William. "The Divinity of Christ," B. H. Streeter, et al., Foundations, A Statement of Christian Belief in Terms of Modern Thought: by Seven Oxford Men. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1914.

Tennant, F. R. The Concept of Sin. Cambridge: University Press, 1912.

Tennant, F. R. *The Origin and Propagation of Sin.* "Hulsean Lectures," 1901-1902; Cambridge: University Press, 1902.

________. *Philosophical Theology.* Vol. II. Cambridge: University Press, 1937.

Tillich, Paul. *The Interpretation of History.* Translated by N. A. Rasetzki and Elsa L. Talmey. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936.

________. *The Protestant Era.* Translated and with a Concluding Essay by James Luther Adams. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948.

________. "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," *The Theology of Paul Tillich.* Edited by Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall. "The Library of Living Theology"; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952.

________. *Systematic Theology.* Vol. I. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

Tolley, William Pearson. *The Idea of God in the Philosophy of St. Augustine.* New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930.

Torrance, T. F. *Calvin's Doctrine of Man.* London: Lutterworth Press, 1949.

Torrey, Charles Cutler. *The Four Gospels, A New Translation.* 2d ed. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947.

Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches.* Translated by Olive Wyon. 2 vols. London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1950.

Turner, J. E. *The Revelation of Deity.* London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1931.

von Hügel, Friedrich. *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion.* First and Second Series. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Limited, 1931 and 1939.

________. *The Mystical Element of Religion as Studied in Saint Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends.* 2d ed. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1927.

________. *The Reality of God and Religion & Agnosticism, Being the Literary Remains of Baron Friedrich von Hügel.* Edited by Edmund G. Gardner. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1931.

Walker, Williston. *John Calvin, The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism, 1509-1564.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906.

Walton, Izaak. *The Lives of Dr. John Donne; Sir Henry Wotton; Mr. Richard Hooker, et al.* London: Bell and Daldy, 1864.

Wells, H. G. *God the Invisible King.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917.

Wendel, Francois. *Calvin, Sources et Évolution de sa Pensée Religieuse.* Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950.

Wesley, John. *The Works of John Wesley.* Edited by Thomas Jackson. 3rd. ed. 14 vols. London: John Mason, 1829.

Whitehead, Alfred North. *Adventures of Ideas.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935.

________. "Immortality," *The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.* Edited by P. A. Schilpp. "Library of Living Philosophers"; Evanston: Northwestern University, 1941. Pp. 682-700.

________. *Process and Reality, An Essay in Cosmology.* "Gifford Lectures," 1927-1928; New York: The Social Science Book Store, 1941.

________. *Religion in the Making.* "Lowell Lectures," 1926; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1926.

________. *Science and the Modern World.* "Lowell Lectures," 1925. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948.

Windelband, W. *A History of Philosophy.* Translated by James H. Tufts. 2d ed. revised. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914.

Wirt, Sherwood. "The Zwinglian Conception of the Church." Unpublished B. D. thesis, Pacific School of Religion, 1943.

Woolman, John. *The Journal of John Woolman,* with Introduction by John Greenleaf Whittier. London: Headley Brothers, n.d.

Zwingli, Huldreich. *The Latin Works of Huldreich Zwingli.* Edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson, William John Hinke, Clarence Nevin Heller. Translated by Henry Preble *et al.* Philadelphia: The Heidelberg Press, 1912-1929.

OC 1 9 '53

Date Due

'S. 6 I λP			
JY 1 9 '54			
AG 6 '54			
MR 1 '55			
NO 3 '55			
T			
MY 29 '58			

Library Bureau Cat. No. 1137

GTU Library
3 2400 00635 4116

Stowe, David Metz

RQ20
St78

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.